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JERUSALEM DELIVERED.

VOL. II.

LONDON
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THE
JERUSALEM DELIVERED
OF
TORQUATO TASSO.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

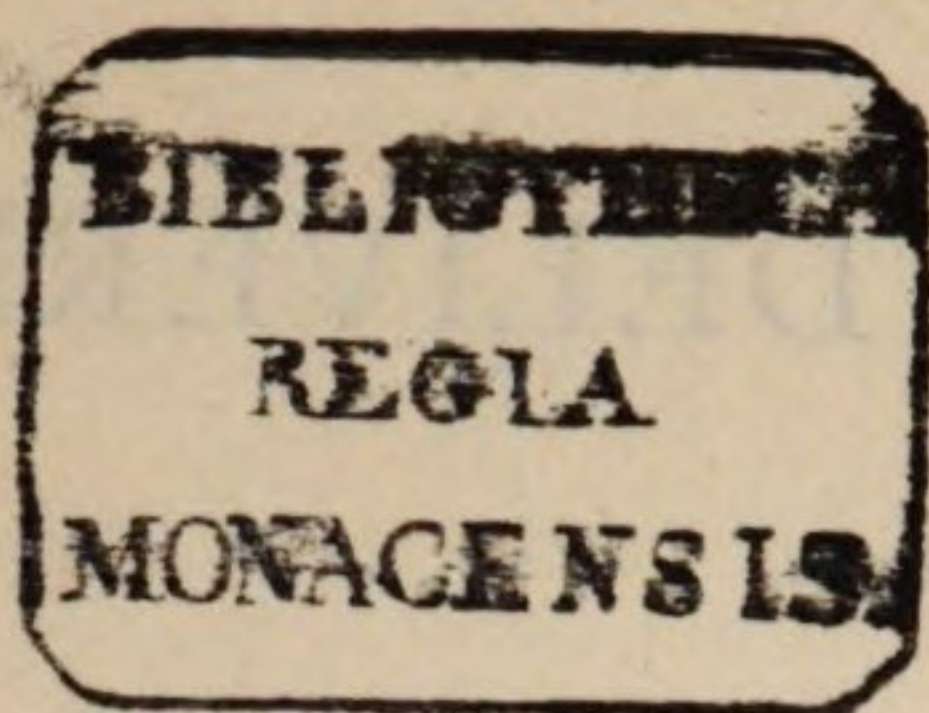
JOHN KINGSTON JAMES, KNT. M.A.

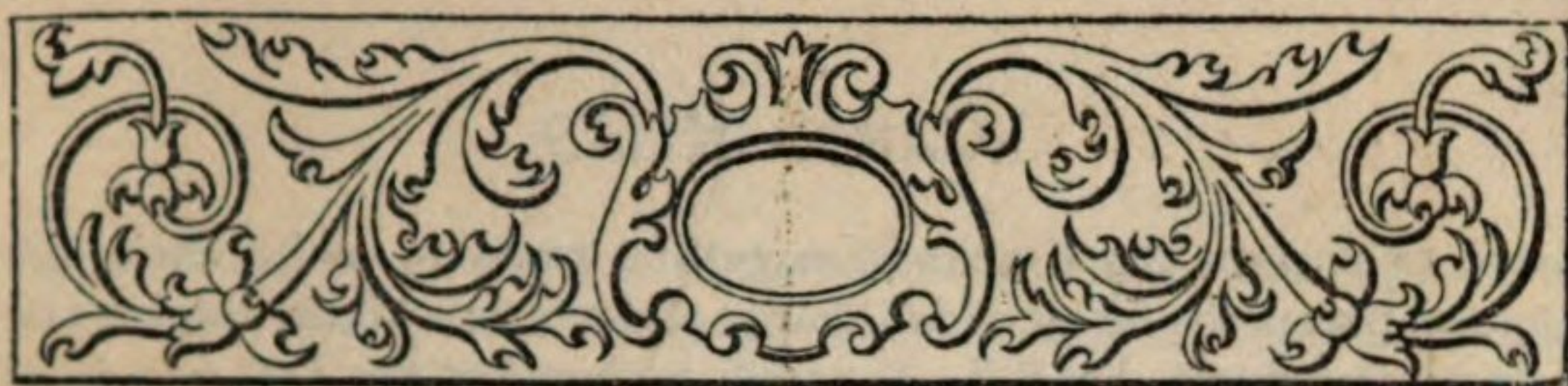
‘O Victor, unsurpassed in modern song’ (BYRON).

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.
1865.





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TO
THE SECOND VOLUME.

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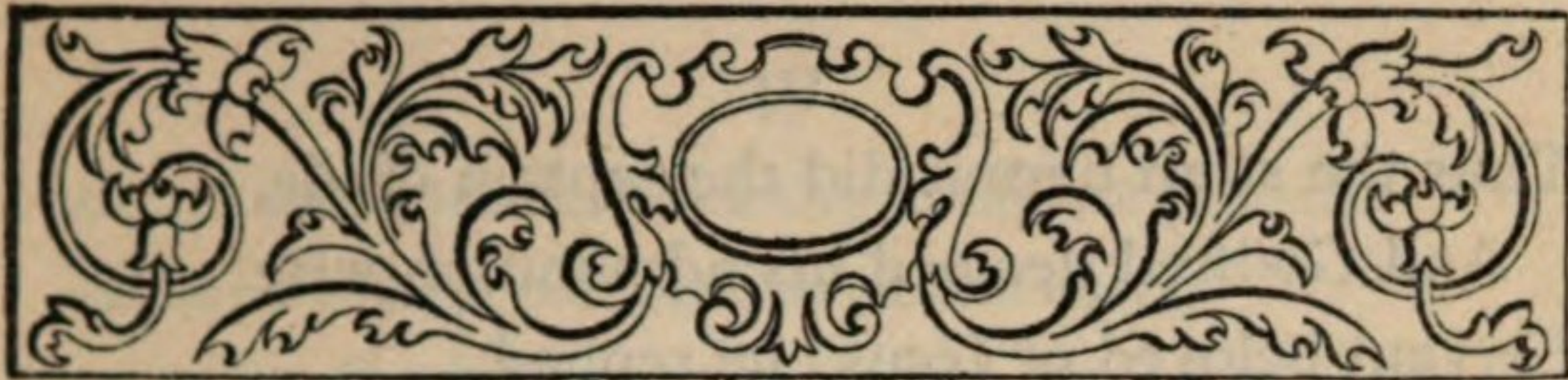
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CANTO XI.

I

WHILE thus the captain of the Christian powers
Urged them the warlike instruments to frame,
He being resolved to storm the royal towers,
The hermit Peter to his presence came,
And drawing him aside, the sage began,
In accents stern and with a solemn air :
' Hosts of this world, O chief, thou ledest on,
But that is not what first should claim thy care.

II

7
' Begin from Heaven, and first with penitence,
In public worship and on bended knee,
Invoke the saints' and angels' army, whence
Alone thou mayest hope for victory.
In sacred vestments let the priests precede,
And anthems chaunt with suppliant voice, while ye,
Great glorious leaders of the army, lead
Their ranks to join those strains of piety.'

III

Thus the stern hermit did the captain chide,
And Godfred deemed his admonition wise.
'Servant beloved of Jesus,' he replied,
'Well pleased I am to follow thy advice.
Now, while I invite the chiefs to come with me,
Thou to the bishops of the host repair,
William and holy Ademar, and be
The sacred rites and pious pomp your care.'

IV

The reverend sage next morn assembled round
With the high priests those of less station, where
Within the camp, on consecrated ground,
They used to glorify the Lord in prayer :
The others in white surplices were dressed,
The bishops gold-embroidered mantles wore,
Which in twain parted, buttoned at the breast
O'er snowy lawn ; their heads proud mitres bore.

V

Peter walked first alone, and to the wind
Displayed the sign in Paradise revered ;
With slow and solemn step the choir behind
In two distinct extended lines appeared,
And in alternate melody replied,
With suppliant voice, with meek and lowly air ;
And closing up their ranks, went side by side,
William and his companion Ademar.

VI

Then, as commanders do, the Bouillon passed
Alone, without companion at his side ;
Next came the leaders two by two, and last
The camp, with weapons of defence supplied :
Proceeding thus the assembled host passed thro'
And out the intrenchments ; in the stilly air
No warlike clangour rose, no bugles blew—
The only sound was piety and prayer.

VII

Thee, Father, and Thy dear coequal Son ;
Thee who from both proceeding breath'st love's fire ;
Thee, Virgin Mother of the God in man,
They now invoke to favour their desire ;
And you that move Heaven's fulgent Seraphim
In trinal orbits ; thee whose hands did lave
The pure unstained humanity of Him
Who knew no sin, in the life-giving wave ;

VIII

They now invoke : Thee too, the solid Rock,
Whereon Christ's Church is built, whose lofty place
A new successor fills, whose hands unlock
The blessed gates of pardon and of grace ;
And the other saint apostles that revealed
The glorious tidings of triumphant Death ;
And those brave martyrs who the Truth had sealed
With their own life-blood and their dying breath :

IX

Those, too, whose pious pens or precepts true
Pointed Heaven's path to all that from it erred ;
And her, Christ's dear and faithful handmaid, who
The noblest life's felicity preferred ;
And virgins chaste in convent cell immured,
Whom to Himself in wedlock God unites ;
And those who firmly tortures had endured,
Despising crowns and the vain world's delights.

X

Chanting such hymns, the pious populace,
Winding along in ample circles, came
Direct towards Olivet with solemn pace,
Which from the olive tree derives its name ;
A Mount from sacred story wide-world known :
It to the eastward of the wall doth rise,
And parting it from the imperial town
Jehoshaphat's precipitous valley lies.

XI

Thither the tuneful army bends its way,
And with its music the deep valley fills ;
To the high peaks the sounds are borne away,
And Echo answers from a thousand hills.
It seemed like sylvan choir that was concealed
Among the trees, or from the caverns came ;
Such resonant reverberations pealed
With Jesus' now, and now with Mary's name.

XII

Meanwhile the walls the astonished Pagans throng,
And watch in silent wonder from their heights
The slow-paced windings, the submissive song,
And the strange splendour of the outlandish rites ;
But when the pageant's novelty had ceased,
Derisive yells the impious miscreants poured ;
And as their taunts and blasphemies increased,
The torrent, mount, and spacious valley roared.

XIII

But not for that did Jesus' flock refrain
From their sweet melody and touching words ;
Nor did they heed them, nor more notice deign
Than to so many flocks of chattering birds ;
Nor feared, though by far-darted shafts pursued,
That such could check their harmony divine,
But hoped they would be able to conclude
The hymns begun with such devout design.

XIV

An altar, then, on the hill-top they raised,
Where the Lord's Supper by the priest was spread ;
On either side refulgent cressets blazed
Of burnished gold suspended over head.
William put on more costly vestments here ;
But first in silent meditation stays,
Then lifting up his voice in accents clear,
With self-arraignment and thanksgiving prays.

XV

Those near him listened with attentive ear ;
Those far, 'twas all they could, kept fixed their eyes ;
But when he had performed the rites austere
Of the pure Lamb's mysterious sacrifice,
'Depart,' he said, and, raising up his hands,
With priestly unction the Crusaders blest ;
Then to the camp returned the pious bands
By the same path that coming they had pressed.

XVI

The encampment entered and dismissed the ranks,
Godfred at once to his pavilion went,
Escorted by a dense array of Franks,
Ev'n to the threshold of the imperial tent.
Here he took leave of them, retaining none
But the great chiefs to join his festive board ;
And in the honoured seat that faced his own,
Placed with respect Toulouse's aged lord.

XVII

But when their thirst and natural appetite
For food was sated, Godfred added : ' All
Prepared must be, with the dawn's earliest light,
To carry by assault yon rampired wall.
As that will be a day of sweat and blows,
So this to rest and preparation spare :
Let each withdraw, then, and enjoy repose,
And for the fight himself and troops prepare.'

XVIII

They then took leave, and, by the trumpet's sound,
The heralds straight the chief's commands convey,
That every soldier under arms be found,
Marshalled and ready at the dawn of day.
Thus they that morn gave partly to repose,
And part to preparation and deep thought,
Until calm Night, rest's silent friend, arose,
And a fresh respite to their labours brought.

XIX

Still doubtful was the dawn, the birth of day
But faintly in the Orient was discerned ;
No iron share cleaved yet the dewsprent clay,
Nor had the shepherds to the fields returned ;
Still on the boughs slept safe each little bird ;
Free were the woods from hound or hunter's cry ;
When, at the morning's bugle call, was heard
'To arms !'—'to arms !' re-echoed through the sky,

XX

'To arms !' 'to arms !' Those joyous, welcome words
Concordant thousands thunder as one man.
Aroused, Prince Godfred rises up, nor girds
His golden cuishes or great breastplate on,
But now the arms of a foot soldier wore,
Not stiff or hard, but lissome and most light ;
Their easy burden he already bore,
When gallant Raymond joined the pious knight ;

XXI

And seeing the captain armed in such a mode,
His secret purpose instantly divined.
'Where is,' he cried, 'thy corslet's solid load?
Why leave thine iron armature behind,
And thus half armed go forth? I can't approve
That thou shouldst with such poor defence depart;
To me, signor, these indications prove
That bent on humble goal of fame thou art.

XXII

'What seekest thou, O prince? The simple prize
Of him who scales a wall? This task impose
On the less worthy crowd, whose duty 'tis,
And let them their less useful lives expose.
Resume thou, then, thy usual arms and post,
And of thy body, for our sake, take care;
Thy soul, the life and spirit of the host,
For God's sake guard, and from such risks forbear.'

XXIII

He ceased, and thus the gallant Godfred: 'Know
That when in Clermont, in my young career,
On me this sword great Urban did bestow,
And made me Christ's devoted cavalier,
I vowed to God in secret, that I would
The part of captain not alone sustain,
But would employ my valour, when I could,
As simple soldier in this great campaign.

XXIV

‘ When I shall have, then, all my tactics formed,
Against the foe the combat to renew,
And fully have the offices performed
That from commander of the host are due,
’Tis right that yonder I my course direct,
And the vow made unto my God observe
(Nor do I think to that thou canst object) ;
Let Him then guard me, and my life preserve.’

XXV

He ceased. At once the cavaliers of France,
And his two brothers, his example shared ;
And the other princely leaders, without lance,
In lighter arms as foot-soldiers appeared.
Meanwhile, the Pagans had ascended where
The lofty ramparts, stretching towards the West,
Confront the starry cluster of the Bear,
That part being less protected than the rest.

XXVI

Elsewhere so strong, the city had not recked
The slightest damage from the foe’s assault ;
But here not only did the king collect
His regular soldiers, but, in their default,
Had, as a last resource, assembled there
The old, and those of ev’n the tenderest years ;
Who move about, and to the stronger bear
Bitumen, sulphur, lime, darts, stones, and spears.

XXVII

With flashing arms, balistæ, pikes, and bows
Bristles the rampart that o'erlooks the plain ;
And there, in form of horrid giant, rose
Breast high above it, mighty Solyman ;
Amid the merlons of the lofty wall
Arganté towers, and is discerned afar ;
And in the angle turret, over all,
Clorinda waits the coming shock of war.

XXVIII

A heavy load of piercing arrows, lo !
And burnished quiver from her back depend ;
And, see ! already she has seized the bow,
The bolt affixes, and prepares to bend.
Upon the passage of the advancing foe
The lovely archer sets her eager eyes :
Thus, Fancy deemed, upon the world below
The Delian virgin arrowed from the skies.

XXIX

Beneath, on foot, the hoary monarch made
His way from gate to gate ; then, from the wall,
Observed if all his orders were obeyed,
And cheer and reassurance gave to all ;
Here reinforcements furnishes, and there
Of arms and stores provides a fresh supply.
Meanwhile, sad matrons to the mosques repair,
To supplicate their impious deity :

XXX

‘Do thou, O Lord, with just and powerful hand,
Asunder rive the Frank marauder’s spear,
And ’neath these portals strow that blasphemous band
Which desecrates the name that we revere.’
Thus prayed, nor down there were their voices heard,
’Mid Death’s eternal lamentations lost :
Now, while the city prayed, and thus prepared,
The pious Bouillon marshals out his host.

XXXI

With extreme foresight and consummate art,
He ranges forth his foot, and in two sides
Obliquely formed, in echelon, that part
Intended to assault the wall, divides.
In the centre, the balistæ he unites
With other horrid instruments of war,
Whence stones and javelins towards the embattled heights,
Like flashing thunderbolts, projected are.

XXXII

Behind the foot the heavy horse he posts,
The light sends forward to patrol around ;
Then gives the sign of battle. ’Mid the hosts
The archers and the slingers so abound,
And arms so numerous from their engines fly,
That from the merlons the defenders fall ;
Some quit their posts, and some are seen to die ;
Thinned are already those that crowned the wall.

XXXIII

Then dashed the Franks impetuous o'er the field,
And towards the ramparts with fresh vigour sped ;
And some had shield adapted upon shield,
And with them made a covering for the head ;
Some crept beneath the mighty engines, which
Afforded shelter from the stony rain,
Then strove to fill, arriving at the ditch,
Its void, and make it level with the plain.

XXXIV

Not of soft mud or water was the fosse, (1)
For this the soil allowed not ; whence with ease
They filled it up, tho' deep and broad across,
With gabions, stones, and sods of turf, and trees.
Meanwhile Alcasto was the first to show
His daring head, and 'gan the wall to scale,
Raising a ladder, which he mounted, tho'
Deluged by fiery rain and iron hail.

XXXV

The impetuous Switzer had already won
Half the aerial path with matchless force,
Butt for a thousand arrows, yet not one
So injured him as to obstruct his course ;
When a huge mass of round and ponderous rock,
Like shell from mortar, by Arganté thrown,
As up he clomb, Alcasto's helmet struck,
And to the bottom dashed him headlong down.

XXXVI

Not mortal was the blow, but still the fall
Stunned him ; he lay a voiceless, moveless weight.
Then cried the gibing victor from the wall :
‘ Fallen is the first, who next will share his fate ?
Why not come forth, ye sneaking, skulking braves,
And open battle, like Arganté, dare ?
No aid ye’ll find in your outlandish caves,
But in them die, like wild beast in his lair.’

XXXVII

Not for his challenge ceased the Franks, concealed
Beneath their concave covering, but remained
Compact and close, each ’neath his upraised shield,
Which firm the bolts and ponderous weights sustained.
Now ’gainst the walls the battering rams are led,
Vast engines of colossal woodwork reared,
With a ram’s solid iron-plated head,
Whose butt alike by gate and wall is feared.

XXXVIII

Meanwhile a rock, suspended from the walls
By hands of hundreds to protect the town,
Upon the tortoise fell, and as it falls
It seemed as tho’ a mountain had fallen down,
The shields’ inwoven union crashing through ;
It many a helmet smashed and many a head,
Strewing with arms the ground beneath, which grew,
From bones, and brains, and blood, a ghastly red.

XXXIX

No longer now beneath the sheltering roof
Of their machines the attacking Franks remain,
But from the latent risks to open proof,
Dauntless, rush forth, and their own strength maintain.
These ladders fix and scale the lofty wall ;
These batter its foundations ; lo, its flanks
Already totter—nay, begin to fall—
Before the desperate onslaught of the Franks.

XL

And fallen they had beneath the horrid blows
Which the great battering ram directed there,
Did not the Turks their violence oppose
With all the known appliances of war ;
Gabions of wool they interpose where'er
The mighty beam inclines its murderous course,
Which on themselves the rude concussion bear :
Thus the soft substance breaks the engine's force.

XLI

While bravely thus the Christians fought, and taxed
Their every effort to possess the town,
Seven times Clorinda bent, seven times relaxed
Her fatal bow, and shot seven arrows down ;
And oft, as thither the swift quarrels scud,
So oft the barb and feathered wings are stained,
Not in plebeian, but in noblest blood :
Ignoble mark that haughty fair disdained.

XLII

The first she wounded was a cavalier,
The younger heir of England's king. His head
But scarcely did above the mantelet peer,
Than against him the deadly quarrel sped ;
Nor could steel gauntlet—with such force it flew—
Prevent it riving his right hand in twain ;
Whence from the fight, disabled, he withdrew,
Fuming, but more from passion than from pain.

XLIII

The Count of Amboise on the trench's bank,
And on the ladder bold Clotharius died ;
From breast to back transfixed the former sank,
The last her arrow pierced from side to side :
The Flemish chief's left arm, while in the act
Of swinging the huge ram, her shaft restrained ;
He paused, and strove the arrow to extract,
But in his flesh the iron barb remained.

XLIV

Incautious Ademar, who, far remote,
Watched the fierce combat with solicitous look,
The mortal reed upon his temple smote ;
When, as he placed his hand where he was struck,
Through it, behold, another arrow tore,
And nailed it to his face ; upon the hill
Sank the bold priest, and bathed with sacred gore
The arms directed by a woman's skill.

XLV

Then near the battlements, on Palamede,
While, scorning every peril, he ascends
Up the steep ladder, the seventh fatal reed
Falls, and its point in his right eye descends,
And, passing thro' its nerves and concave ball,
At the nape issues in most bloody guise ;
Headlong he tumbles from the assaulted wall,
And at its foot, without a struggle, dies.

XLVI

Thus shot Clorinda. Meanwhile Godfred sought
Another plan to attack the Saracens,
Having against the nearest portal brought
The most colossal of his huge machines ;
This was a tower of wood, whose giant height
To the wall's level rose, and, with a strong
Body of men being freighted for the fight,
Was slowly dragged on rolling wheels along.

XLVII

The moving mass approached the battle's brunt,
Launching forth bolts and javelins at the foes,
And as in action ship with ship is wont,
So with the adverse walls it tried to close ;
But, on their guard, the Pagan cavaliers
Shoved off its frowning front and sides immense ;
Battering with stones, and thrusting back with spears,
Now its huge wheels, and now its battlements.

XLVIII

Such flights of shafts and stones were hurled, that black
The face of heaven, from these, from those, became ;
Midway, two clouds of missiles met, and back
Rebounded some of them to whence they came :
As stripped of leaves are trees by wintry rains,
Congealed to hail ; as fruit, still unripe, falls
Before its time upon the whitened plains,
So fell the Pagans from the embattled walls.

XLIX

But since on them the greatest losses light,
As shielded less by helmet or cuirass,
Part of those still surviving take to flight,
Cowed by the thunder of that mighty mass ;
But stayed Nicæa's former lord, with him
There likewise stayed some few, the army's flower ;
And fierce Arganté, snatching up a beam,
Rushed to resist and counterpoise the tower.

L

Thrusting it back, he kept it at the length
Of the long fir with powerful arm ; and there
Down came Clorinda to display her strength,
And the grave perils of her comrade share.
The Christians meanwhile cut the ropes that bound
The pendent wool with long sharp sickles, whence
This their protection falling to the ground,
The ramparts left disarmed of all defence.

LI

Thus tower above, and fiercer far below,
The battering ram continued its dead thunder ;
Whence, from within, the streets began to show
Thro' the breached walls, thus rudely rent asunder.
Godfred now left his station in the field,
More close the crumbling ramparts to explore,
Completely covered by the larger shield
Which he so seldom in the battle bore.

LII

And looking round attentively, descried
Down to the breach Prince Solyman descend,
And where the gaping ruins yawned most wide
To plant himself, the passage to defend ;
Clorinda guarded all the upper part,
And with her stayed the fierce Circassian knight :
Thus looking, Godfred felt his throbbing heart
Burn with magnanimous ardour for the fight.

LIII

Whence turning round to good Sigier, he said
(He for him bore another shield and bow) :
' Give me the other, faithful squire, instead
Of this, that less encumbered I may go ;
For I will over yon dismantled stone
Try to be first the doubtful pass to free ;
High time it is that to the world were shown
Some noble token of our gallantry.'

LIV

His shield exchanged, he had scarcely spoke, when flew
A whizzing shaft and struck the cavalier,
Piercing his leg, and passing onwards thro'
The nervous part where pain is most severe.
The honour Fame, Clorinda, gives to thee,
That 'twas thy hand the deadly cord that drew ;
And if that day or death or slavery
Thy Pagan comrades 'scaped, to thee 'tis due.

LV

But that brave chief, as tho' he did not feel
The anguish of his wound, would not arrest
His onward movement, but with matchless zeal
The ruins mounted, and cheered on the rest.
Still finding that his leg can ill sustain
His body's weight, that he can only halt,
And that all motion but increased the pain,
At length is forced to abandon the assault.

LVI

And gallant Guelpho beckoning with his hand,
Addressed him thus : ' Constrained I am to go ;
To thee I delegate the chief command ;
Do thou my duty, in my absence, do ;
But a short time I shall be absent ; I
Go, and return.' This said, he left the field,
Mounted a nimble courser that stood nigh,
Yet could not reach the intrenchments unconcealed.

LVII

Godfred's departure seemed to turn the tide ;
The Franks give way and their success departs,
While strength increases on the adverse side,
And new-born hopes refresh the Pagans' hearts ;
His grace no more the God of War affords,
To nerve the faithful ; their first ardour fails ;
No longer blood attracts their sluggish swords ;
The very clarion's notes seem dying wails.

LVIII

And on the battlements swift reappear
The fugitives, thence chased by wild alarms ;
And seeing a woman show no sign of fear,
True love of country all the women arms ;
You see them run and place themselves on guard,
With hair dishevelled and with tucked-up gown ;
Hurl javelins, and all dangers disregard,
Ev'n death itself, for their belovèd town.

LIX

But what increased the Franks' alarm, and nerved
With courage the defenders of the walls
(And quickly by both hosts it was observed),
Is that Prince Guelpho, stricken, downward falls ;
Amid a thousand him his Fate o'ertook,
Guiding a rock its path aerial thro' ;
At the same time, and by a similar stroke,
Raymond was caught and hurled down headlong too.

LX

Bold Eustace, too, upon the trench's bank
Was also struck ; nor at that moment, so
Disastrous to the fortune of the Frank,
'Gainst them directed was a single blow—
And there were many—that did not divide
Body from soul, or cause at least some wound.
Flushed with success, Arganté in his pride
More fierce became, and thus the foe lampooned :

LXI

' This is not Antioch ; this is not the night
Of Christian frauds confederate ; you see
Warriors awake, the sun's unclouded light,
And other modes and forms of strategy.
What, then ! so little are your spirits fired
By love of praise and booty, that your ranks
Cease from the encounter, and so soon are tired ?
Women ye are, nor name deserve of Franks ! '

LXII

As thus he spoke, the infuriate cavalier
Worked himself up to such a pitch of rage,
That the ample city's boundaries appear
For his great daring insufficient stage ;
With mighty strides he therefore rushes where
The open breach gave access to the walls,
Blocks up the passage, and, with taunting air,
To Solymano, who stood near him, calls :

LXIII

‘ Behold the place and moment to decide
Our valour, Solyman, ’mid yonder host.
Why cease? what fearest? There, the walls outside,
Let him the laurel seek that craves it most.’
Thus spoke: and both, without an instant’s pause,
Rushed vying to the open field, inspired
One by blind fury, one by honour’s laws,
And the fierce challenge of his rival, fired.

LXIV

Sudden and unexpectedly the twain
Flashed on the foe, by emulation buoyed ;
Then were such heaps of Christian soldiers slain,
Such shields and helmets scattered and destroyed,
Such ladders broken, and such rams cut down,
That to a mountain they appeared to swell,
Forming upon the ruins of the town
Another wall, in place of that which fell.

LXV

And those who thought to mount the breach, and gain
The glorious premium of a mural crown,
No more aspire an entrance to obtain ;
Nay, seem ev’n ill prepared to hold their own,
And to this new and fierce attack give way,
The engines leaving to their powerful foes,
But little fit for further service, they
So battered were by their infuriate blows.

LXVI

Transported by their impetus, the pair
On, ever on, in wider circuits scour ;
Call to the citizens for fire, and bear
Two blazing pines against the dreaded tower.
So rush the Furies, from hell's fiery porch,
To upset the world ; so each gaunt sister shakes,
In Pluto's service, her far flaring torch,
And throws aloft her wreaths of hornèd snakes.

LXVII

But the unconquered Tancred, who, elsewhere,
Cheered on his Latins 'gainst the Saracens,
Of the bold deed no sooner was aware,
And saw the double flame, the two great pines,
Than, cutting short his words, he quickly moved
To check the havoc which the Pagans spread ;
And so significantly his prowess proved,
That the late victors, vanquished, turned and fled.

LXVIII

Thus with the turn of varying Fortune, turned
The varying chances of the doubtful fray.
Meanwhile, tho' inly for the fight he burned,
In his great tent, the wounded captain lay :
Baldwin was there, and good Sigier, nor lacked
Of sorrowing friends a sympathising train ;
But, as he strove from out his leg to extract
The iron barb, he broke the brittle cane.

LXIX

Then, the most short and expeditious way
To effect a cure, he bade the leeches take,
That to the bottom they should open lay
The wound, and wide and deep incisions make :
' Send, send me back,' he cried, ' that I may share,
Ere day is o'er, the glories of the strife.'
He ceased, and, leaning on a massy spear,
His leg stretched out to the physician's knife.

LXX

To aid him came hoar Erotimus, who
Was born beside the Po ; the healing power
Of every noble water he well knew,
And latent virtue of each herb and flower.
Dear to the Muses, still the sage preferred
The minor glory of his voiceless art ;
He, who to snatch from death frail man but cared,
To names could immortality impart.

LXXI

The chief, whose rigid look showed no alarm,
Supported stands, and frets, unmoved to tears,
While, with his tunic tucked up o'er his arm,
And robe succinct, the leech still perseveres,
Now with skilled hand, now with strong herbs, to start
The imbedded steel ; then tries and tries again,
With nipping pincers, to extract the dart,
But can't succeed—his labour is in vain.

LXXII

In no way Fortune aids him : she would seem
Her smiles, from his endeavours, to withdraw.
Meanwhile becomes his anguish so extreme,
That in it they almost his death foresaw ;
But touched, his guardian angel, in that hour,
Culled upon Ida's sides fresh dittany,
A crested plant that bears a purple flower,
In whose young leaves a thousand virtues lie.

LXXIII

Well mother Nature to the mountain goats
Teaches the hidden virtue it contains,
When, stricken thro' their soft and shaggy coats,
Deep in their sides the feathered shaft remains.
This, tho' in regions far remote it grew,
Plucked in a moment his good angel hath,
And, unperceived, its healing juices threw
In the prepared and medicated bath.

LXXIV

And holy lymph in Lydia's fountain found,
And panacea in the water poured,
Which the sage sprinkling on the captain's wound,
The arrow issued of its own accord.
Staunched is the blood, the deadly pains depart
From out his leg, his strength returns, he stands :
Then Erotimus cried : ' No master art
Hath thee restored, nor these poor mortal hands !

LXXV

'A greater power thee saves : At God's command
Came here an angel, made for thee a leech ;
I see the signs of his celestial hand.

Arm ! arm ! Why pause ? Arm, arm, and mount the breach.'
Greedy for fight, the pious cavalier
Round his healed leg his crimson cuishes clasped,
Brandished aloft his formidable spear,
Laced up his helm, and shield abandoned grasped ;

LXXVI

And from the entrenchments, flanked by thousands, rode,
Whom towards the battered town once more he led ;
The heavens above became a dusty cloud,
The earth beneath all trembled from their tread.
But when afar the adverse forces viewed
His near approach, a shudder cold as ice
Ran thro' their bones, and froze their very blood ;
Then Godfred raised his voice, and shouted thrice.

LXXVII

Those haughty tones his loyal people knew,
And, roused by his exciting battle-cry,
Resume their forward movement, and anew
To dash aloft and scale the ramparts try.
But the fierce couple had not failed to reach
The rifted ruins ; there had made a stand,
Defending, stubbornly, the open breach
'Gainst bold Tancredi and his gallant band.

LXXVIII

Here, scorning danger, and with lowering front,
Came sheathed in steel the Paladin of France,
And, seeing Arganté in the battle's brunt,
Against him hurled his iron-headed lance.
With him no mural engine could compare,
To launch the spear, or massy stone propel ;
The knotty timber thundered thro' the air,
And on Arganté's upraised buckler fell.

LXXIX

The buckler opened to the piercing ash,
Not ev'n his coat of mail resist it could ;
It tore thro' all his armour with a crash,
Nor paused till dyed in Saracenic blood.
But the Circassian from his flesh plucked out
The steel-bound lance, regardless of the pain,
And hurled it back to Godfred, with a shout,
' Take back your arms ; I give them you again.'

LXXX

By the known path flew and flew back the spear,
Bearer of mischief first, of vengeance now ;
But haply missed the Christian cavalier,
Who, stooping down, escaped the intended blow,
Which pierced Sigiero, his devoted squire,
Deep in the throat ; he deeming it no grief
To leave Heaven's light, and the Sun's golden fire,
And die in place of his belovèd chief.

LXXXI

At the same moment mighty Solyman
With a huge stone struck down the Norman knight,
Who, writhing from intolerable pain,
Spun like a top while falling : the sad sight
Magnanimous Godfred could no longer bear
Unmoved, unruffled, but, with sword in hand,
Rushed to close quarters, and with dauntless air
High o'er the smoking ruins took his stand.

LXXXII

Then dire had been the strife where none would yield,
And he had surely done most wondrous things,
Had not advancing night the world concealed
Beneath the gloomy horror of her wings,
And her pacific shadows interposed
'Mid wretched mortals' rage. Thus from the fray
Prince Godfred ceased, and then retired ; thus closed
The deadly struggles of that bloody day.

LXXXIII

But ere the pious Bouillon left the field,
He made them bring the sick and wounded back,
Nor to the enemy would his engines yield,
But safe preserved them from a fresh attack ;
Safe, too, returned with them the monster tower,
Especial terror of the Pagan foes,
Tho' it was likewise damaged by the shower
Of arrowy sleet and rock's repeated blows.

LXXXIV

'Scaped from the many perils that prevail,
A place of safety it now sought to gain ;
But, as a gallant ship, which in full sail
The billows scorns, and sweeps the boisterous main,
Staves in her side when near the wished-for shore,
On hidden rocks or treacherous quicksands cast ;
Or as a steed, all dangerous passes o'er,
Stumbles when near sweet home, and falls at last ;

LXXXV

So tripped the tower ; for on that side which lay
Exposed the most to the rock's dire assault,
Two wheels so injured were, that, giving way,
The nodding ruin was obliged to halt :
But the attendant escort, with all those
That rolled it thither, propped it up until
The smiths, who hastened to assist them, close
Its wounds with practised and ingenious skill.

LXXXVI

Thus Godfred ordered, who desired to see
The work completed ere a day should pass,
And all the approaches occupying, he
The guards disposed around the lofty mass.
But in the city they could plainly hear
The hum of voices and the hammers fall,
Could see the lights of thousand torches there ;
From which they knew—at least suspected all.



CANTO XII.

I

'TWAS night ; nor yet had the exhausted hosts
Refreshment taken in the arms of sleep ;
But here the Franks, alert upon their posts,
A sharp look-out around the workmen keep ;
There, the defences nodding to their fall,
The busy Pagans hasten to repair,
And to make good the breaches in the wall :
The sick and maimed employ their common care.

II

Their wounds at length being bandaged, and complete
Part of the work commanded for the night,
They leave the rest, since now to slumber sweet
A deeper shade and greater calm invite.
Yet could not thus the warrior maid appease
Her soul, athirst for honour and for praise ;
She work solicits when the others cease,
And, joined by Arganté, to herself thus says :

III

‘Arganté and King Solyman to-day
Great marvels truly have performed ; alone,
They have thro’ countless masses made their way,
And the Franks’ mighty engines overthrown ;
The highest merit I can vaunt is, I
Made distant warfare, sheltered in a tower—
Successful archer, that I can’t deny.
Can woman, then, do this, and nothing more ?

IV

‘’Twere better far, in mount or forest glade,
Against wild beasts to launch my darts and spears,
Than, where a manly valour is displayed,
To show myself a girl ’mid cavaliers.
Why not again the dress of woman wear,
If worthy, or in cloister pass my days ?’
Thus communes with herself ; at length the fair,
Great things resolving, to Arganté says :

V

‘Long time it is that fierce and strange desires,
Undaunted chief, my troubled spirit fill ;
Nor can I tell if God the thought inspires,
Or man creates an idol of his will :
Outside the entrenchments of the accursed Giaour
Behold yon watch-fires ; there, with fearless breast,
With fire and sword, I’ll go and burn the tower.
Could I but this, to Heaven I leave the rest.

VI

‘But should it happen that the Fates above
To my return oppose their fixed decree,
Of one who has been a father in his love,
And of my maids, I leave the charge to thee ;
Find means to send back to far Egypt’s land
That poor old man, and each disconsolate dame.
For God’s sake do this : at thy generous hand
His age, their sex, may well compassion claim.’

VII

Amazed, Arganté felt his throbbing breast
Beat faster from the stimulus of fame.
‘What ! wilt thou go, and leave me with the rest
Of the vile crowd, to my undying shame ?
Shall I enjoy, beyond the reach of harms,
To watch the flames and curling smoke ?’ he saith.
‘No, no, Clorinda ; if allied in arms,
I’ll share thy risks, thy glory, and thy death.’

VIII

‘I have a heart, too, that despises death,
And deems that life is well exchanged for fame.’
‘To it, just title,’ the fair warrior saith,
‘By thy magnanimous sortie thou canst claim.
I am but woman, and my death were nought,
Nor loss would bring ; but should Arganté fall
(Nay, Heaven forbid the inauspicious thought !),
Who would remain to guard the invested wall ?’

IX

‘ Fallacious pleas,’ the cavalier replied,
‘ Against my fixed resolve you idly use ;
I’ll follow, if you will consent to guide,
But will precede, fair dame, if you refuse.’
This point being settled, to the king they went,
Who them received while seated at divan ;
When thus Clorinda : ‘ Gracious sire, consent
To view with favourable eyes our plan.

X

‘ Arganté, here, has vowed to burn the great
And lofty tower, nor vain will be his boast ;
I will with him, O king ; we only wait
Till into sleep fatigue allures yon host.’
At that the king raised up his hands on high,
While o’er his wrinkled cheeks sweet tears ran down :
‘ Praised be thy name, O Thou that turn’st thine eye
Upon thy servants, and preserv’st my crown.

XI

‘ Fall it will not, nor does my heart despair,
While such brave souls unite in its defence ;
But how can I, you justly honoured pair,
Your merits praise enough, or recompense ?
Let Fame proclaim your praises, and record
Your deathless actions in immortal strains ;
The deed in part shall be its own reward,
And part, no trifling share of our domains.’

XII

Thus spoke the hoary-headed king, and strained
Now her, now him, most fondly to his breast ;
But Solymano, who was there, nor feigned
The noble jealousy his heart possessed,
Exclaimed: ' This sword shall match thine own, or show
Not far behind ; it is not worn in vain.'
' Ah,' cried Clorinda, ' are we all to go ?
Who, if thou com'st with us, will then remain ?'

XIII

With haught denial, and with look of pride,
Him to refuse, Arganté had prepared ;
But him the king forestalled, and first replied
To Solymano, with benign regard :
' Ever the same art thou, magnanimous knight,
And aye consistent in thy bold career ;
Thou ne'er art wearied in the hour of fight,
Or daunted by appearances of fear.

XIV

' And well I know, that going, thou hadst gained
Fresh laurels ; but, unfitting it appears
That all went forth, and none of you remained,
Who are my staunchest, noblest cavaliers.
Nor would I let these go, for we should spare
Such precious blood, if to our native land
The deed itself of less importance were,
Or could be trusted to another hand.

XV

‘ But since, around the tower, a numerous crew,
In its defence, keep guard on every side,
So that we could not take it with a few,
And many could not at this hour provide,—
Let this bold couple, which now volunteers,
And in like perils has so oft been thrown,
Go in God’s name, and may success be theirs !
Since worth a thousand are these two alone.

XVI

‘ Thee, as befits thy royal rank, I pray,
Within the gates with the others to retire ;
And when (as I have firm conviction) they
Return in safety, having waked the fire,
Do thou repulse the foe, if in pursuit
They approach the walls, and save them, and protect.
Thus spoke one king ; the other, altho’ mute,
Betrayed his secret chagrin at being checked.

XVII

‘ May it please you wait,’ then sage Ismeno said,
‘ To sally forth until a later hour,
When I a fiery compound shall have made
That will adhere to, and consume the tower.
It then may hap perchance that part of those
Who guard it, and surround, may slumbering be.
This settled, each to his pavilion goes,
To attend the fitting opportunity.

XVIII

Clorinda now took off her snowy plume,
Nor blazoned arms or silver surcoat bore,
But a sad suit, prophetic of her doom,
Rusty and black as darkest midnight, wore ;
Deeming, concealed in such disguise, she could
Pass with more ease among the hostile spears.
Near her the eunuch, old Arsete, stood,
Who nursed her childhood from her tenderest years ;

XIX

And dragging after her his aged frame,
And her steps following, wheresoe'er she stirred,
Had marked the change of armour, and became
'Ware of the grievous perils she incurred.
He showed his hair, gray in her service made ;
His former cares as arguments he used ;
He wept distracted, and, heart-broken, prayed
That she the emprise would leave ; but she refused.

XX

At length he said : ' Since thus more obstinate
Becomes your wayward spirit in its ill,
Nor doth my tears or age commiserate,
My warm entreaties or compassionate will,
I will more plainly speak, and thou shalt hear
Of thy condition things before unknown ;
Then to thy plan or my advice adhere.'
Intent she looked, as he continued on :

XXI

‘ With prosperous sway o’er Ethiopia reigned,
And still perhaps reigns there, Prince Senapus, who
The holy laws of Mary’s Son maintained,
And them maintained his swarthy people too.
There, as a Pagan slave, did I preside
O’er maidens, whom to manage was my duty,
Being made attendant on the royal bride ;
Brown she was, yes—but brown destroys not beauty.

XXII

‘ Her spouse adored her, but suspicion’s frost
Equalled the intensity of love’s ardent fire,
And many a pang that frantic passion cost
His tortured breast, and did such force acquire,
That he concealed her from all mortal eyes ;
Nay, grudged ev’n those that peer from heaven’s bright zone.
She ne’er rebelled, but, humble, chaste, and wise,
Made her lord’s fancies and delights her own.

XXIII

‘ With figures that a piteous story told,
Her chamber walls illuminated were :
Near where a dragon lay, her locks all gold,
Her cheeks all roses, stood a maid most fair ;
A knight had struck the dragon with his spear,
And at his feet the blood-bathed monster laid ;
Here oft she knelt, and mourned with many a tear
Her secret errors, and to Jesus prayed.

XXIV

‘ Pregnant, meanwhile, a little girl she bore,
Thyself—and thou as driven snow wert fair ;
Alarmed she was, and marvelled greatly o’er
Thy colour strange, as of some monster rare.
At length she planned thy birth should be concealed,
Knowing the king’s unbounded jealousies,
Since the fair colour thy fair face revealed
Had proved her faith’s unfairness in his eyes.

XXV

‘ And in thy stead, born a short time before,
A Moorish infant to the king was shown ;
But since the place where she was hid, the tower,
Was occupied by maids and me alone,
To me, who loved her well and was her slave,
Thee unbaptized she gave with her own hand ;
Nor thee in baptism’s waters could she lave,
As such was not the custom of the land.

XXVI

‘ Thee, weeping, she committed to my care,
And charged to nurture in some distant place ;
But how describe her anguish, her despair,
Or how redoubled was each last embrace ?
Tears drowned her kisses, sobs and deep-drawn sighs
Choked her laments ; at length about to part,
With face upturned to heaven, “ O God,” she cries,
“ Who know’st all secrets, and canst read my heart,

XXVII

‘ If that immaculate is, and undefiled
My nuptial bed, and these frail limbs of mine,
Not for myself I pray, who am reviled
By sins unnumbered in thy sight divine;
But spare, ah spare, this innocent, to whom
A churl her mother of her breast must be;
From other sources may her fortune come,
Nor me resemble but in chastity.

XXVIII

‘ And thou, blest warrior, that didst snatch the maid
From the fierce dragon’s sacrilegious hold,
If on thy altar I have tapers laid,
Or odorous incense offered up, or gold,
Do thou for her with such effieience pray,
That, faithful, she aye turn to thee for aid.”
Emotion choked her breath, she swooned away,
And pallid death was in her face portrayed.

XXIX

‘ My tears flowed freely, as receiving thee
I bore thee off ’mid leaves and flowers concealed,
In a small basket, but so dextrously,
That not to mortal was the fact revealed :
Unknown I went, when passing through a wood
Black from forbidding shade, to my surprise
I saw a tigress coming where I stood,
Wild threats and fury gleaming in her eyes.

XXX

‘ I sprang upon a tree, so smit with dread,
And thee, poor child, upon the sward forsook ;
The horrid beast then, turning her proud head,
Approached and fixed on thee a searching look ;
Nathless her murderous instincts she repressed,
And her aspect became most meek and mild,
And drawing near, with her huge tongue caressed
Your tiny form : you patted her and smiled.

XXXI

‘ And as with her you fearless ’gan to play,
And your small hand upon her muzzle placed,
She offered you her teats, as is the way
Of nurses, and disposed them for your taste ;
And you did suck. As I the scene descried,
I stared like one that some strange portent viewed ;
But when her milk your wants had satisfied,
She left and sought the covert of the wood.

XXXII

‘ I straight jumped down, and, seizing thee, returned
To where my footsteps first directed were.
And in a little burg some time sojourned,
There brought thee up in secresy, and there
With thee remained till the revolving sun
Had sixteen months to weary mortals brought :
To lisp forth half-formed words thou hadst begun,
And on the ground uncertain footprints wrought.

XXXIII

‘ But having reached that period when the old
Decline in strength and hasten towards the grave,
Rich to repletion with thy mother’s gold,
Which, queen-like, she at my departure gave,
I longed that roving sort of life to quit,
And oft for my dear native country sighed ;
I pined once more among old friends to sit,
And cheer life’s winter at my own fireside.

XXXIV

‘ Whence towards my native Egypt I disposed
My homeward course, and thou my flight didst share ;
Then reached a stream, but found myself enclosed
By robbers here, and by the river there.
How act? Thou, burthen sweet, could not be left,
Yet would I ’scape the threatened robbery ;
I plunged in the stream, and while my right hand cleft
The foaming flood, the left supported thee.

XXXV

‘ Swift rolled its angry waters, and midway
Whirled round in circling eddies ; but being thrown
Into the centre of the vortex, they
Whisked me, all helpless, round and dragged me down.
I left thee then, but favouring currents bore
And placed thee safely on the sandy beach ;
The breeze, too, helped to carry thee ashore :
I, faint and panting, scarce the land could reach.

XXXVI

‘ With joy I took thee up, but in the night,
When Nature slept in silence most profound,
Dreaming, I saw the figure of a knight
Brandish a sword ; he menacingly frowned,
And sternly cried, “ I charge thee to revere
Her mother’s first injunctions unto thee ;
Baptize this infant, who to Heaven is dear,
And whose safe care entrusted is to me.

XXXVII

“ I guard her and defend ; ’twas I that gave
Sense to the stream, compassion to the beast ;
And woe ! if thou my solemn warning brave,
Who am God’s messenger.” This said, he ceased.
I, waking, rose, and from the spot withdrew
With the first twinkle of the morning star ;
But, the shade deeming false and my creed true,
To have thee christened took no further care,

XXXVIII

‘ Nor of thy mother’s wish : whence thou wast bred
A Pagan, and I hid from thee the truth.
Thou grew’st in years, hast nobly fought and bled,
O’ercome thy sex and nature, and in youth
Both fame and lands acquired. Thyself dost know
What since that early period has occurred ;
Thou know’st I have been thy slave and father too,
And at thy side through hostile squadrons spurred.

XXXIX

‘ But yester morn, at day-break’s earliest beam,
Oppressed by slumber that resembled death,
I saw the self-same figure in a dream ;
More stern his look was, and with louder breath,
“ Traitor ! ” he cried, “ behold Clorinda’s doom
Approaches fast ; the hour is almost due.
Mine she shall yet, in spite of thee, become ;
The grief be thine : ” this said, away he flew.

XL

‘ Take heed then, dearest, for the angered skies
Menace thee with some strange misfortune soon :
I know not how. Perhaps their threats arise
That others should their fathers’ faith impugn ;
Perhaps that faith is true. Then doff thy arms,
Curb thy bold spirit, nor with Heaven contest.’
He ceased, and wept ; she, too, felt strange alarms,
Since such another dream her heart oppressed.

XLI

Still brightening up her brow, she said at last :
‘ I’ll hold that faith which I consider true,
But o’er which thou the veil of doubt wouldst cast,
That faith which with my nurse’s milk I drew ;
No fear shall turn me from this enterprise
(To draw back now no generous spirit could) ;
No, not if Death himself, in fiercest guise
That mortal eye e’er saw, before me stood.’

XLII

She then consoled him ; but as the hour drew nigh
To execute her vaunt, the undaunted fair
Went off and joined Arganté, her ally,
Who the grave perils wished with her to share :
Ismeno spurred their innate courage, which
Flowed of itself, and ere they sought the field,
Gave them two balls, of sulphur made and pitch,
With light in lamp of hollow brass concealed.

XLIII

Softly they steal, 'neath cover of the night,
And down the hill with rapid footsteps go,
Then reach the spot where towers, in giant height,
The formidable turret of the foe ;
Their full hearts throb with feverish desire,
Nor can contain the rage that boils within ;
Fierce passions prompt to deeds of blood and fire,
When the guard challenges—' The countersign !'

XLIV

They still proceed in silence, whence the guard,
'To arms ! to arms !' shouts with redoubled force ;
At this, concealment the bold pair discard,
Nor tardy now is their adventurous course.
As Heaven's artillery or mortal shells
Fire, thunder, burst, so for each daring Turk
To start, arrive, cut down the sentinels,
Ope and rush in, was but a moment's work.

XLV

Not arms of thousands, nor a thousand blows,
Could stop them from effecting their desire ;
The lights concealed they hastily uncloze,
And set the fierce combustibles on fire,
Then spread and wrap them round the frame of oak.
But how describe from every quarter how
Crept and increased the flames, and how the smoke,
In lurid volumes, stained Heaven's stainless brow !

XLVI

Mixed with its turbid wreaths, to heaven aspire
Great globes of flame, in many a tortuous maze ;
The rising wind, too, fans the raging fire,
Uniting all in one tremendous blaze.
Prepared, the Christians seize their arms, since all
That burst of light with sudden fear dismays ;
The dreaded sides of the huge engine fall,
And one short hour destroys the work of days.

XLVII

Meanwhile two squadrons of the Christians came
With prompt despatch to where the fire arose.
'Your blood,' Arganté shouts, 'shall quench that flame,'
And turned with threatening front upon his foes.
Still inch by inch with fair Clorinda yields,
With her to gain the ridge's top intent.
From rains streams less increase, than o'er the fields
The crowds collect, and mount with them the ascent.

XLVIII

Wide open lay the Golden Gate, and there, (2)
Girt by his armèd legions, stood the king,
From their great feat to welcome the bold pair,
If favouring fortune should them homeward bring.
Both sprang upon the threshold ; on their track
Precipitously dashed the Christian rout ;
But Solymano charged and drove them back :
The gate then fell, but shut Clorinda out,

XLIX

Alone excluded was the warrior maid,
For as they barred the portal she had gone,
With cruel purpose and enfeebled blade,
To punish one who struck her—Arimon.
One stroke sufficed to lay the offender low,
Nor knew Arganté she had left his side,
Since the fierce fight, dense air, and surging foe,
His sight and other senses stupefied.

L

But when her angered spirit she had quenched
With the Frank's blood, and to reflect was led,
Saw the gate closed, and she herself intrenched
By hostile swords, she gave herself for dead.
Still noticing she was observed by none,
To save her life a novel thought arose ;
She feigned to be a Christian, and, as one
Unnoticed, stole among her mortal foes.

LI

Then as a wolf slinks cowering to his lair,
Some dark deed done, and shuns the beaten way,
So, favoured by the darkness of the air
And wild confusion, she retired away.
Alone Tancredi the occurrence knew ;
For he, arriving but a short time back,
The combat reached as Arimon she slew,
Then watched her, marked, and followed on her track.

LII

He wished to prove her strength in arms ; a knight
He deemed her, worthy with himself to mate ;
But she went winding round the rugged height,
To gain admission at some other gate.
But as behind the impetuous Tancred sped,
His armour rattled, whence, with angry breath,
Upon him turning, 'Why such haste?' she said ;
'What bring'st thou me?' He answered, 'War and Death.'

LIII

'War thou shalt have, and Death,' Clorinda cried ;
'I'll give thee both.' This said, the maiden halts ;
And seeing his foe on foot, with knightly pride
At once Tancredi from his destrier vaults,
And having drawn his broadsword, she her brand
(Their self-love sharpened and their anger fired),
They for the dread encounter take their stand,
Like two young bulls by jealous rage inspired.

LIV

Worthy those deeds, instead of envious gloom,
Of crowded lists and clearest sunshine were.
O Night, that hidest in thy lightless womb
And in oblivion screenest feats so rare,
Grant that I draw them thenceforth, and consign
To future ages their full blaze of light,
That their fame live, and thro' their glory shine
Undying memory of thy darkness—Night !

LV

Retire they don't, or foil, or parry—no ;
Nor plays dexterity the slightest part ;
Not theirs the full, the feigned, the cautious blow ;
Their rage—the darkness mocks the use of art ;
Clash with discordant resonance their brands,
As steel meets steel ; their feet their ground maintain :
Moveless are they, while ever move their hands,
And not a stroke or thrust descends in vain.

LVI

Offence resentment to revenge incites,
And vengeance taken the offence renews ;
Whence aye fresh causes goad the furious knights,
And in each stroke fresh virulence infuse.
And as more close the cruel contest grows,
Finding how unavailing is the blade,
They used the pommel, and with desperate blows
To smash each other's helm and shield essayed.

LVII

Three times the cavalier the maiden grasps
In his strong arms, and thrice the maiden too,
From their tenacious knots, herself unclasps—
Knots not of lover, but of savage foe.
Once more they use their sabres, which they stain
In many a crimson wound ; then, out of breath,
With one consent, both he and she refrain,
O'erstrained, exhausted, from the work of death.

LVIII

Each now returned his foe's defiant gaze,
While leaning, breathless, on the falchion's hilt ;
Already the last star had paled its rays
Before the dawn, which Orient splendour gilt,
When Tancred, seeing that more profusely ran
His foeman's life-blood than his own, repress
He could not his delight. Vain, puffed-up man !
Elated by each semblance of success.

LIX

Fool ! why this joy ? Lost, lost in endless pain
Will be thy triumph, when the truth appears ;
Thine eyes will pay (if life the shock sustain),
For every drop of blood, a sea of tears.
As, without speaking, each the other eyed,
The blood-stained knights obtained a brief repose ;
Breaking at length the silence, Tancred cried
That his opponent should his name disclose.

LX

‘’Tis hard that we, unseen by mortal eyes,
Should so much valour uselessly display ;
Since, then, invidious destiny denies
Praise, or a witness adequate, I pray
(If prayers can find acceptance from a foe),
Thee to reveal thy name and quality,
That, conqueror or conquered, I may know
Who will adorn my death or victory.’

LXI

Fiercely she answered : ‘ You demand in vain
What it is not my habit to unfold ;
But whosoe’er I be, one of the twain
That fired your mighty turret you behold.’
With wrath her speech inflamed the Christian knight,
Who shouted : ‘ This in evil hour you tell ;
Your silence, no less than your words, invite
Me to revenge, discourteous infidel.’

LXII

Rage to their hearts returned at this, and led
Once more to battle the exhausted knights.
Fierce fray ! whence skill is banished, strength is dead,
And in their place alone brute fury fights.
Oh, what wide bloody gaps the falchion rived
In their soft flesh, thro’ steel and quilted vest ;
And if frail life in either still survived,
Despite it was that bound it to the breast.

LXIII

As the Ægean, tho' the storm be o'er,
That had convulsed it to its deepest caves,
Not tranquil yet, retains the roll and roar
In its still big and agitated waves ;
Thus, tho' with loss of blood that vigour waned,
Which put at first such life into each blow,
Yet still their former energy remained,
Impelled by which they madly fight ; but, lo !

LXIV

The hour, the fatal hour at length arrives,
To quit this life that bold Clorinda should :
Through her fair bosom the sword's point he drives,
Which there infixed drinks greedily her blood.
A reeking torrent deluges her vest,
Which, stiff with tissue of embroidered gold,
Confined with yielding tenderness her breast ;
She feels death near, nor can herself uphold.

LXV

He, threat'ning, follows up his victory,
Forcing and pressing the transfixèd maid,
Who, as she fell in mortal agony,
Her last words uttered, her last wish conveyed ;
Words a new spirit prompted unto her,
Spirit of Hope, of Charity, of Faith,
By God Himself inspired, who, tho' she were
In life a rebel, willed her true in death.

LXVI

‘ Friend, thou hast won, and, as I pardon thee,
Do thou too pardon, not this fearless clay,
But my dark soul. Ah, pray for it, and free,
By baptism, all my secret sins away.’
In that faint voice’s gentle tones there stole
Such soft unearthly music on his ear,
As quenched all rage, and, gliding to his soul,
Forced to his eyes a sympathetic tear.

LXVII

A short way off, a little murmuring rill
Burst from the mountain’s bosom ; there the knight
Hastened, his helmet from its source to fill,
Then sad returned for the great pious rite.
He felt his hand shake, while he sought to bare
Her, as yet, unknown features to the light :
He saw, he knew her, and stood rooted there.
Ah, recognition ! ah, heart-rending sight !

LXVIII

Yet died he not, for in that hour of strife
He summoned all his fortitude, the pain
He felt suppressing, while he gave new life
To her with water whom his sword had slain.
But while he spoke the sacred words, a ray
Of joy ecstatic lit Clorinda’s face ;
Dying, she smiled, and, reborn, seemed to say,
‘ Heaven opes its portals—I depart in peace.’

LXIX

Her snowy face a lovely pallor wears ;
Of lilies, blent with violets, such the hue ;
Her eyes are fixed on heaven, and Heaven appears,
With tender ruth, the penitent to view.
Then, raising up her cold and ungloved arm,
She gave the knight her hand, as earnest deep
Of peace in lieu of words, and in that form
The maiden passed away, as if asleep.

LXX

But, seeing her pure and gentle soul depart,
He, with it, lost the strength he had attained,
And yielded up dominion of his heart
To sorrow passionate and unrestrained.
It froze his life's blood, and a deathlike shade
O'er his wan face and flickering spirit threw :
The living languishes most like the dead,
In blood, in silence, attitude, and hue.

LXXI

And sure his life, in that despairing mood,
Bursting its frail defence's fragile thread,
Had her emancipated soul pursued,
That just before its deathless wings had spread ;
But that, by chance, a troop of Franks arrived,
Whom water, or such want, had thither led :
They took the maid and warrior, who survived
Scarce in himself, and who in her was dead.

LXXII

Their chief, tho' distant, by his armour, knew
The Christian prince, and thither straightway went :
He recognised the lifeless beauty too,
And mourned the strange, unhappy accident ;
Yet would not leave to savage wolves a prey
(Tho' Pagan deeming it) her lovely corse,
But both their bodies made his men convey,
And to Tancredi's quarters bent his course.

LXXIII

Nor was the slow and easy motion felt
By the unconscious wounded cavalier,
Whose moans declared that life within still dwelt ;
That death had not yet ended his career :
But the other voiceless, moveless mass of clay,
Too clearly proved the vital spark had fled ;
Thus near but in two separate chambers they
Were placed, the half-living warrior and the dead.

LXXIV

Engaged on varied duties round the knight,
A crowd of sympathising esquires stands,
When lo ! returns to his faint eyes the light,
He hears the voices, feels the soothing hands ;
But still his mind, bewildered by the past,
Of his return not certain, hung in doubt ;
Stupid he stared, and recognised at last
The squires, the room, then feebly faltered out ;

LXXV

‘ Do I then breathe and live ? Still see the beams,
The odious beams of this disastrous day ?
That, witness of my dark misdoing, seems
Against me by its presence to inveigh.
Ah, timid, tardy hand ! why now not dare,
Thou, so adept in all the ways of strife ?
Foul minister of death ! why now forbear
To cut the thread of this my guilty life ?

LXXVI

‘ Pierce, pierce this breast ; and with thy cruel sword
Complete the torture of thy martyred chief ;
Perhaps tho’ used to actions so abhorred,
Thou’dst deem it mercy thus to end my grief ;
Then as a dread example I’ll remain,
The wretched monster of unhappy love—
A wretched monster, worthy of the pain
That life itself will for the future prove.

LXXVII

‘ My life I’ll pass ’mid torments and ’mid care ;
Just Furies, they will my sad steps pursue ;
The dark and lonely shadows I shall fear,
Since they will ever bring my crime in view ;
And the sun’s face with hate and horror seeing,
I shall avoid as some reproachful elf ;
Fearing myself, and from myself aye fleeing,
I still shall aye be haunted by myself.

LXXVIII

‘ But where—woe, woe is me !—ah, where remain
The relics of that form so chaste, so fair?
All that my fury left entire, has been,
It may be, mangled by wild wolf or bear.
Ah, prey too noble ! (ah, unfortunate maid !)
Ah, far too sweet—ah, far too precious feast !
’Gainst whom the darkness and the wood arrayed
My fatal falchion and the ravening beast.

LXXIX

‘ But I will fly to where ye are, if ye
Exist on earth, dear, darling relics, still ;
But should it hap on your fair limbs (ah me !)
Wild beast has glutted his bloodthirsty will,
The self-same jaws that swallowed, the same tomb
That them engulphed, my sepulchre shall be.
Ah, doubly honoured and most welcome doom,
That will unite me, tho’ in death, with thee !’

LXXX

Thus spoke the wretched knight, but when he hears
That in his tent her precious body lies,
His gloomy aspect in a moment clears,
Like cloud o’er which a flash of lightning flies.
Then raising up his limbs’ enfeebled weight
From off the couch where they supported lay,
Scarce able to move, with vacillating gait,
Thither the silent mourner bends his way.

LXXXI

But when he came, and saw in that fair breast
The ghastly wound his murderous hand had given,
And that no lustre her wan face possessed,
Like a nocturnal tho' unclouded heaven,
He trembled so that he had fallen, if aid
Had been at greater distance from the spot.
' Ah face, that canst ev'n sweeten death,' he said,
' Thou canst not sweeten more my bitter lot !

LXXXII

' Ah, lovely hand, that didst outstretch to me
The tender pledge of friendship and of peace,
How do I come, and how, alas ! find thee ?
And you, chaste, delicate members, are not these
The hateful and intolerable sign
Of my ferocious rage and cruelty ?
Ye stony eyes match well these hands of mine—
They gave the wounds that ye still live to see.

LXXXIII

' Tearless ye see them too ; then stream, my blood !
Stream, since my frozen tears refuse to flow.'
Sudden he ceased, grown desperate, nor could
Resist the wish to end by death his woe.
He tore his bandages away ; red rain
In streams poured from each irritated wound,
And died he had, if from the poignant pain
That made him swoon, new life he had not found.

LXXXIV

Placed on the couch again, his fluttering soul
Back to its odious offices returns ;
But his sad fortune and excessive dole
Each from the tongue of busy rumour learns ;
Thither at once the pious chief repairs,
And thither throngs each true and anxious friend ;
But no grave counsels, no persuasive prayers,
Could his soul's settled stubborn sorrow bend.

LXXXV

As mortal wound that in a delicate limb
Angers if touched, and feels still greater smart,
So the sweet comforts that surrounded him
Increased still more the anguish of his heart ;
But venerable Peter, like good herds
That tend their sickly lambs with kindly care,
Rebuked his frenzy with stern, solemn words,
And tried to check, by counsel, his despair.

LXXXVI

‘ O Tancred, Tancred ! how thyself unlike ;
How changed the early promptings of thy mind.
What stops thine ear ? What clouds of darkness strike
Thine eyes, and render thee so lost, so blind ?
This thy misfortune is the work of God ;
Dost Him not see, His gracious words not hear,
Who the lost path, by thee once haply trod,
Points out, and chides thy fatuous career ?

LXXXVII

‘ He now recalls thee to that dignity
Of cavalier of Christ in this Crusade,
Which thou hast left, (unworthy change!) to be
Th’ inglorious lover of a Pagan maid.
Ah, blest misfortune ! thy compassionate God
Gives thee thyself the means of grace to choose,
And thy mad faults corrects with gentle rod.
His gracious offer wilt thou then refuse ?

LXXXVIII

‘ Refuse, ungrateful, Heaven’s salubrious gift,
And against God thy puny wrath display ?
Ah, wretched Tancred ! why thus plunge adrift,
And to such unchecked hopelessness give way ?
On dread eternity’s tremendous brink,
Thou hang’st at mercy of His slightest breath—
See’st thou it not ? Ah, see, I pray, and think,
And curb that grief which leads to double death.’

LXXXIX

He ceased. That second death raised up such fear
As for the first allayed the wish ; whence he
To those blest words of comfort lent an ear,
And somewhat calmed his grief’s intensity ;
But still at times he wept beyond control,
And, unrestrained, bewailed his hapless doom ;
Himself addressing now, now her freed soul,
Which perhaps listened from its heavenly home.

XC

To her at rise, to her at sunset hour,
He prays, he weeps, he calls with faltering tongue :
Like nightingale, from whose deserted bower
Hard-hearted churl has filched her unfledged young,
Mourning the sad lone nights, her piteous cries
Thro' the still air and silent forest peal.
At length, as day breaks, he half shuts his eyes,
O'er which, still weeping, ruthless slumbers steal.

XCI

When dreaming, lo ! in vesture star-inwrought,
Appeared the form of his lamented love ;
But much more beautiful than erst, she brought
With her old look a splendour from above ;
She seemed, with tenderest sympathy, to dry
His streaming eyes ; she seemed to whisper, ' See
How lovely, how beatified am I ;
Calm, then, thy grief, dear faithful friend, for me,

XCII

' Since thou hast made me such. 'Twas thy mistake
That took me from the living in thy sphere ;
'Twas thy devotion did me worthy make
To reach my God, and sit with angels here ;
And, 'mid these realms of heavenly bliss, I'll pray
That here a place He will to thee assign,
Where, in the sunshine of eternal day,
Thou mayst enjoy their loveliness and mine.

XCIII

‘ If, then, thou grudgest not thyself such bliss,
Nor art by sensual madness led astray,
Live ; for I love thee (and acknowledge this),
As far as love a child of earth I may.’
Thus speaking, rapture sparkled in her gaze,
And did a more than mortal light impart ;
Then, shrouded in the halo of her rays,
She left, fresh cheer infusing in his heart.

XCIV

Consoled, he woke, and to the prudent care
Of skilled physicians his worn frame resigned,
Then orders gave to its last home to bear
That form which erst such noble life enshrined ;
And if her tomb was not with marble decked,
Or by the chisel of skilled sculptor chased,
Chosen at least was stone and architect,
As far as time permitted to his haste.

XCV

Illumed by torches in extended line,
With noble pomp her body was conveyed ;
Her arms suspended from a branchless pine,
In form of trophied emblems, were displayed.
But when the still enfeebled cavalier
His limbs could raise upon the following day,
With ruth and reverence filled, he went to where,
Interred, her loved and honoured relics lay.

XCVI

And having reached the loved, the fatal tomb,
Where his own living soul imprisoned lies,
Cold, faltering, mute, with look of deepest gloom,
On the dull stone he riveted his eyes.
Bursting at length into a flood of tears,
He faintly sighed, then feebly faltered out :
' Oh, stone, which this my loving heart reveres,
That hast my flame within, my tears without.

XCVII

' Not Death thou dost in thy cold clasp conceal,
But quick warm ashes, where lies buried Love ;
In thee too well my wonted fires I feel,
Which, if less sweet, not less impassioned prove.
Ah, take these sighs, and these my kisses take !
Thus drowned in tears, they will my grief attest,
And since I cannot, give them for my sake
To the loved relics that within thee rest.

XCVIII

' Give them ; for if her lovely spirit e'er
Upon her lovely relics cast her eyes,
No anger 'gainst my boldness she will bear,
Since hate and anger dwell not in the skies.
In the sole thought she did my crime condone,
My heart still beats amid such misery ;
She knows that guilty was my hand alone,
Nor grieves if loving her I lived—so die !

XCIX

‘Yes, loving her, I’ll die. Ah, happy day,
Whene’er it come ; but happier, happier far,
If, as now round thee loitering, I may,
Within thy womb, lie side by side with her.
In heaven may our united souls abide ;
May our frail ashes share the self-same tomb,
And death possess what was to life denied :
Ah, could I hope for this, how blest my doom !’

C

Meanwhile of her untimely fate and fall
Confused reports and busy whispers rise,
Till they gain certainty, and spread ; thro’ all
The affrighted town the unwelcome rumour flies,
Mingled with women’s wail and shrieks of ire,
As tho’ by storm Jerusalem were ta’en,
And the fierce foe laid waste with sword and fire
Each hallowed dwelling and each holy fane.

CI

But on Arsete, whose sad face appears
The picture of despair, are turned all eyes ;
He like the rest did not dissolve in tears
Grief, which in him too indurated is.
But with foul dust begrimed his silver hair,
And beat distractedly his face and breast ;
Now while on him the assembled people stare,
Forth stepped Arganté, and the crowd addressed :

CII

‘ Much did I wish to follow the bold maid,
Soon as I knew that she remained outside,
And ran at once to offer every aid,
Nor from her destiny my own divide.
Where did I fail in act or speech ? I prayed
The king to unbar the portal ; but in vain :
No reason moved, no warm entreaty swayed,
Him who doth all with power despotic rein.

CIII

‘ Ah, had I then gone forth, I either would
The warrior maid have rescued from her foes,
Or, where the earth was crimsoned with her blood,
Life ended by a memorable close.
But what, alas ! could I do more ?—what try ?
Against my counsel man and God were set ;
Clorinda’s death predestined was ; but I
Can ne’er what to her memory’s due forget.

CIV

‘ Hear, Salem, what Arganté doth declare !
Hear it, O Heaven, and if I fail, do thou
Blast me with lightning ! I deep vengeance swear
’Gainst the Frank murderer ; nay, more, I vow,
Ne’er from my settled purpose to depart,
Nor e’er this falchion from my hip depose
Till I have plunged it in Tancredi’s heart,
And flung his felon carcass to the crows.’

CV

Thus spoke Arganté ; his concluding words
The assembled crowd saluted with applause ;
For in their grief his vowed revenge affords
Hope that his sabre will avenge her cause.
Vain, idle oaths ! how opposite in all,
To vaunt so lofty, the result will be ;
Since in like combat will he 'neath him fall,
O'er whom he boasts in fancied victory.



CANTO XIII.

I

SCARCE had the wall-breaching immense machine
In ashes fallen, than in his subtle breast
New projects were concerted by Ismene,
Whereby the town might more securely rest,
By which prevent he might the attacking power
From getting fresh material from the wood ;
So that they could not make another tower,
Nor more molest the battered city could.

II

At no great distance from the Christian tents,
'Twixt lonely vales, a lofty wood is found,
Most thick with antique horrid timber, whence
Are cast unwholesome shadows all around ;
Here, when the sun shines brightest from on high,
Uncertain, dull, and colourless the light ;
Such as seems doubtful in a clouded sky,
If night to day succeeds, or day to night.

III

But when the sun goes down, o'ershadowing, rise
Night, darkness, clouds, and horrors, that appear
Like Acheron's deepest gloom ; they blind the eyes
And fill all hearts with strange mysterious fear.
No flocks nor herds, for pasture or for shade,
Doth rustic here, or frightened shepherd guide ;
Or traveller enter, save when he has strayed
From the right road, but points and passes wide.

IV

The witches hold their midnight revels here,
Each with her lover ; o'er the clouds they float ;
This a ferocious dragon doth appear,
That wears the shape of shapeless mountain goat.
Foul, shameless gathering, whom the attractive bait
Of happiness allures by false delights,
With lewd, indecent pomp to celebrate
Banquets profane, and impious marriage rites.

V

'Twas thus believed ; and of the natives none
From that dread forest ever plucked a bough ;
But Franks infringed it : 'twas the only one
That furnished their immense machines. And now
Here came the wizard, choosing the opportune
Mysterious silence of the night as best—
The very night of the same day—and soon
Had formed his circle, and weird signs impressed.

VI

With one foot bared, inside the circle's space,
To mutter potent words he had begun ;
Thrice to the Orient he turned round his face,
And thrice to where declines the setting sun ;
Thrice shook his wand, which from the tomb profound
Could raise and animate the buried dead ;
Thrice stamped his naked foot upon the ground,
And then, with cry of dreadful import, said :

VII

'Hear! Hear, O ye, whom from the stars above
Heaven's thundering bolts hurled headlong down below ;
And ye inhabitants of air, that move
The raging whirlwind and the tempest strow ;
And ye that to lost spirits minister
Eternal torments, never-ending thrall.
Inmates of hell, I summon you ; appear !
And upon thee, their sovran lord, I call.

VIII

'Take in your charge this forest, and control,
As, numbered, I deliver them, each tree ;
And as within the body dwells the soul,
So let their trunks your habitations be ;
That the Franks hence may fly, or stop at least
At the first blow, afraid your wrath to meet.'
The horrid imprecations, ere he ceased,
None but an impious tongue would dare repeat.

IX

At that the stars, with which fair Night adorns
Her spangled canopy, their lustre paled ;
The moon grew troubled, and withdrew her horns
Beneath dark clouds, and kept her splendour veiled.
Enraged, he 'gan his cries reiterate :
'What ! spirits summoned, not obey my will ?
Whence this delay ? why pause ? Perhaps ye wait
For spell more powerful, or more secret still ?

X

'I have not yet forgotten, from disuse,
My cruel art's most efficacious aid ;
Still, still my tongue is able to produce
That dreadful sound which Pluto is afraid,
Ev'n on his burning throne, to disobey,
And which all hell doth with attention treat.
I will—I will' . . . More he was going to say,
But found the incantation was complete.

XI

Thither flocked spirits countless, infinite ;
Partly of those that through the welkin roam,
Partly of those that to the realms of light
Had from the earth's obscure abysses come ;
Slowly, still trembling at the laws severe,
That hindered them from bearing arms, but these
Forbade them not the power of coming here,
'Mid leaves to lie, and harbour in the trees.

XII

As nought was wanting to complete his part,
O'erjoyed, the wizard sought the king's retreat.
'Cast all thy thoughts aside ; cheer up thy heart,
Since now secure, sire, is thy royal seat ;
Nor can the Christians, as they fondly deem,
Renew their engines to assault our gates.'
Thus having spoke, he, one by one, to him
The prosperous issue of his art relates.

XIII

Adding : ' Besides this great success of mine,
I have another reason for delight :
Know then that in celestial Leo's sign
Soon will the Sun with fiery Mars unite ;
Whose flames no cooling zephyr will assuage,
No gentle dews, nor showers of grateful rain,
Since all prognostics in the heavens presage
Excessive drought throughout Judæa's plain.

XIV

' Whence we shall have such heats as ne'er oppress
Sahara's deserts or parched Ind's champaigns ;
Still in the city we shall feel them less,
Since water and such comforts it contains.
But on the adust, and far from pleasant soil,
The Franks will them be unable to endure,
And, first by Heaven o'ercome, an easy spoil
In their spent ranks the Egyptians will secure.

XV

‘Thou, sitting still, shalt triumph o’er thy foes,
Nor were it wise to tempt thy fortune more ;
But if Arganté, who brooks no repose,
And, tho’ well earned, despise it as of yore,
And urge thee with his importunities,
Thou must find means his ardour to restrain ;
Since peace to thee will give the friendly skies,
And deadly warfare with thy foes maintain.’

XVI

On hearing this, the king felt quite assured
That he no longer need the foeman fear ;
And tho’ in parts the ramparts were secured,
Where the rams struck with impulse most severe,
Still with all that, incessant was his care
To make them good where battered by their blows ;
Employing all, both slaves and freedmen there ;
The busy work with toil unceasing glows.

XVII

Meanwhile the chief, who knew ’twas useless, willed
From fresh attack on Salem to abstain,
Until he could the greater tower rebuild,
And the other engines were complete again ;
So to the wood artificers he sent,
Material for such purpose to select.
At dawn of day they to the forest went,
But terrors new their onward progress checked.

XVIII

As simple children dare not raise their sight
To where they deem strange shapes may present be,
Or, as they tremble in the shadowy night,
Fancying they prodigies and monsters see ;
So feared the Franks, not knowing, as they gazed,
The cause that such unusual fright imparts,
If 'twas not fear, which greater monsters raised
Than Sphinxes or Chimæras in their hearts.

XIX

Back they return, and, timid and dismayed,
Both words and things confuse so, that received
With laughter was the terror they betrayed,
Nor were the marvellous effects believed.
Thither, at this, the zealous captain sent
A strong detachment of selected hands
No escort the rest, and give encouragement
To them to execute his high commands.

XX

These drawing nigh to where, in ambuscade,
'Mid those wild horrors the foul demons lay,
No sooner saw the black, funereal shade,
Than turned to ice their very hearts. Still they
Pushed boldly forward, veiling abject fear
Beneath the mask of an audacious face,
And had advanced, so that they now were near
The dreaded entrance of the enchanted place,

XXI

When, from the wood, there issued forth a sound,
That seemed like rumbling of an earthquake's shocks :
From it the south wind's whistling blasts redound,
And wail of billows moaning amid rocks ;
The hiss of dragon, and the growl of bear,
Wolf's howl and lion's roar, the senses stun ;
The rattling thunder and the trump you hear,
Yet all these noises were expressed by one.

XXII

Then grew the cheek of every Christian pale,
And all betrayed a thousand marks of fright ;
Nor reason could, nor discipline prevail,
To urge them forward, or restrain their flight,
Since all endeavours scant and powerless were,
'Gainst the dread influence that appalled each breast.
At last they fled ; and one, with awe-struck air,
The fact excusing, thus the chief addressed :

XXIII

' Not one there is, O prince ! that longer vaunts
To fell yon wood ; it guarded is so well,
That I believe, nay swear, within those plants
Pluto transplanted has the realms of hell.
Thrice must his heart with adamant be bound,
Who dares regard it with unblenching eyes ;
And dead his sense, who listens to the sound
Of those dread noises and unearthly cries.'

XXIV

Such was his tale. 'Mong those that chance brought there,
Alcasto was, a man, as rumour saith,
Who, of a fierce and stupid rashness, ne'er
Quailed before mortal, and made light of death :
Nor monster feared, how dread soe'er its form,
Nor savage beast, the wildest of the plains ;
Not earthquake, lightning, nor terrific storm,
Nor aught more furious that the world contains.

XXV

In scorn he tossed his head, and smiling stood,
Then said : ' Where he dares not, to go I vaunt.
Alone, I intend to fell this frightful wood,
Which has of troubled dreams become the haunt.
Not direst phantom shall prevent me—no !
Nor bird's ill-omened screech, nor forest's yell ;
Thro' those terrific alleys I will go,
Aye, tho' they led me to the jaws of hell.'

XXVI

Thus boasted to the prince, and, undeterred,
Took leave of him, and to the forest went ;
Nor had he scarcely seen it, when he heard
That strange new sound from its recesses sent.
But his bold footsteps it arrested not ;
He still advanced, contemptuous and composed,
And would have passed the interdicted spot,
But that by flames he was, or seemed, opposed.

XXVII

The mighty fire increases ; in the form
Of lofty walls the lurid flames extend,
Girdling the forest with its fiery arm,
The trees from all intruders to defend.
The greater flames, aspiring upwards, wear
The shape of lordly castellated halls ;
And warlike engines were not wanting there,
To guard this new-made Pandemonium's walls.

XXVIII

Oh, what dread monsters there appeared to guard
The lofty towers ! how terrible their look !
Some grimly eyed him, some his passage barred
With flaming arms, which they in menace shook.
At last he fled, but still his flight was slow,
Like that of lion wounded in the chase ;
But still, 'twas flight ! Fear froze his bosom now,
Until that moment an unknown disgrace.

XXIX

Nor yet was conscious of his fear, but saw,
When further on, the intolerable truth,
Indignant and dismayed, while 'gan to gnaw
His heart remorse with its envenomed tooth.
Confounded, thence he slunk amid the crowd,
Burning, yet mute from bitter shame ; nor dared
Raise up those features, formerly so proud,
To meet his peers' reproachful, cold regard.

XXX

By Godfred summoned, he delays, and seeks
Excuse still further to prolong delay ;
Still goes, but slowly, with closed lips, or speaks
As in their sleep unconscious dreamers may.
From his strange diffidence the chief concludes
Defeat and flight, and thus astonished, cries :
' What means all this ? is't witchcraft that deludes,
Or Nature's portents that appal the eyes ?

XXXI

' But if there's one, the promptings of whose heart
To pierce the depths of that wild forest burn,
Let him essay the adventure and depart,
And with at least more certain news return.'
He ceased. The horrors of the haunted wood
Attempted were, on the three following days,
By the most famed, nor was there one that could
Withstand its menace and terrific blaze.

XXXII

Meanwhile, Tancredi had dejected gone
To bury his dear friend ; and tho' his air
Despondent was, and his face pale and wan,
And he ill-fitted casque or mail to bear,
Yet when the need his noble nature found,
He nor the perils nor fatigues refused ;
And with that vigour seemed his frame to abound,
Which in it had the quickening heart infused.

XXXIII

Collected, silent, circumspect, the knight
Advanced, undaunted, to the risks unknown,
And bore unflinching the wood's fearful sight,
The earthquake's rumbling, and the thunder's tone.
Nor felt alarm ; and if within his heart
One flutter rose, it did as soon go down.
Forward he strode, when, lo ! with sudden start,
Before him rose the fire-encircled town.

XXXIV

Aghast at this Tancredi backward draws :
'Of what use here are weapons ?' he exclaims ;
'What ! fling myself into those monsters' jaws,
Or in the throat of yon devouring flames?
Miser of life no knight should ever be,
When aught demands it for the common good ;
But still not lavish it unworthily,
As in attempt so desperate he would.

XXXV

'Still if I fly, what will the army say ?
What other forest can they hope to fell ?
Godfred will never leave without essay
This pass. Perhaps, if I proceed, this hell
Of lurid fire I see, and curling smoke,
Is more in semblance than reality.
But come the worst !' As thus the hero spoke,
He leaped within—O matchless gallantry

XXXVI

Nor 'neath his armour seemed to feel whate'er
Of heat or fervour, as from fire intense ;
Still if true flames, or phantoms false they were,
Ill could decide so soon his doubtful sense ;
For, scarcely touched, the phantasm disappeared,
And a thick cloud the face of heaven o'erspread,
That night and winter brought ; then shortly cleared
The shades away, and gloomy winter fled.

XXXVII

Astonished—yes ! but firm Tancredi stood :
Then, seeing that quiet reigned on every side,
He boldly entered the unhallowed wood,
And all its secrets with attention eyed.
No more those strange appearances he sees,
Nor did he hindrance or prevention find,
Save where the gloomy and entangled trees
His steps retarded and his view confined.

XXXVIII

At length a spacious area he espied,
In form of amphitheatre ; all bare
Of trees it was, save in the midst, where vied,
With lofty pyramids, a cypress ; there
He bent his course, and saw, as he perused,
That the trunk different curious ciphers bore,
Like those antique, mysterious Egypt used
In place of writing in the days of yore.

XXXIX

Amid those unknown signs some words appeared,
Inscribed in Syrian, which he understood.
'O thou, that in these aisles of death hast dared
Thy impious foot, bold warrior, to intrude,
If thou be not as pitiless as brave,
Upon these secret haunts, ah, lightly tread!
Our spirits, sleeping in the lightless grave,
Respect ; the living war not with the dead.'

XL

Thus ran the inscription. While he sought to find
Of these few words the occult, mysterious sense,
He heard in ceaseless blasts the rising wind
Howl through the branches of the wood, and thence
Draw forth a sound that in itself expressed
The plaintive wail of human sobs and sighs,
Instilling vague sensations in his breast
Of pity, terror, sorrow, and surprise.

XLI

With all his force, then, having drawn his sword,
He struck the tree, when, wonderful ! the wound
Of the pierced bark such streams of blood outpoured,
That dyed in crimson was the earth around.
Tho' startled greatly, he renewed the blow,
To see the end now most determined grown,
When there burst forth, as from the tomb, a low,
An indistinct, and melancholy moan.

XLII

‘To wrong me, Tancred, thou’st too much contrived,
Let that suffice ;’ it then distinctly said :
‘Since from the frame which with and thro’ me lived
(Erst happy home !) thou hast my spirit sped :
Why seek this wretched cypress to destroy,
To which hard fate unites me ? Why behave
With so much cruelty as thus annoy
Thy foes, when sleeping in the silent grave ?

XLIII

‘I was Clorinda ; nor the only sprite
Am I that in this rugged timber dwell,
Since every other Frank or Pagan knight,
Who at the foot of Sion’s ramparts fell,
Is here by new and strange enchantment bound
In tomb or body—which I can’t aver :
Sense animates the trees, and shouldst thou wound
A single one, thou art a murderer.’

XLIV

As sickly patient that in fevered dreams
Flame-girt Chimæra or grim Dragon sees ;
And, though he doubts the fact, and partly deems
Them idle phantoms, not realities,
Yet tries to flee, the horrid picture leaves
Upon his heart such terror and dismay :
Thus tho’ the timid lover scarce believes
The false deceits, he trembled and gave way.

XLV

O'ercome by such emotion was his heart,
That turned to stone appeared the cavalier,
Who in the sudden and convulsive start
Let fall his sword—his least sensation fear ;
Nor could contain himself. Before him stood
His murdered idol, moaning and in tears ;
He can't endure the sight of her dear blood,
Nor the faint plaintive wails that reach his ears.

XLVI

Thus the bold heart no dread of death could move,
No form of danger, no horrific fears ;
Alone enfeebled by all-powerful love,
A phantom false deludes and idle tears.
A blast of wind meanwhile his sabre bore
Beyond the wood, so that o'ercome he left ;
But on the roadway found, and grasped once more,
The sword amazement from his hand had reft.

XLVII

Still he returned not, nor attempted more
The hidden secrets of the wood to scan,
But Godfred sought, and, trying to restore
Somewhat his scattered senses, thus began :
'Of things not credited or credible
Herald am I, and must confirm their view,
Since all the accounts of the dread spectacle
And of the fearful sounds are strictly true.

XLVIII

‘ Before mine eyes a wondrous fire appeared,
Which, self-sustained and quickly kindling, rose,
And thence dilating, lofty ramparts reared,
Where monsters stood my passage to oppose ;
Yet these I passed, nor hindrance had, nor fight.
Uninjured I, tho’ flames around me burned ;
When of a sudden winter came and night,
But soon broad day and summer skies returned.

XLIX

‘ Still more—within each tree there is transferred
A human soul, man’s very counterpart ;
I know it from experience, having heard
A voice whose moans still echo in my heart ;
The wounded trees distilled red drops of gore,
As formed of tender flesh. I must avow
My own defeat. No, no ; I dare no more
Strip off the bark or pluck another bough.’

L

As thus he spake, the captain ’gan to wave
In a great tempest of distracting thought,
Thinking should he the enchanted forest brave
(For such he fancied it), or if he ought
Material seek in some more distant place,
But not so difficult. As thus he weighed
Both plans, the hermit sought his doubts to chase,
Recalled him from his reverie, and said :

LI

‘ The bold design abandon ; other hands
Must fell the wood. Lo ! urged by favouring gales,
The fatal bark has reached the desert sands,
And now in harbour furls her golden sails ;
Now, burst his bondage in Armida’s bower,
The expected warrior leaves his lone retreat ;
Nor is far distant the predestined hour
Of Sion’s capture, and our foe’s defeat.’

LII

While speaking thus, with zeal his features burned,
And more than mortal did his words resound.
And pious Godfred to new projects turned
His active thoughts, that little respite found ;
But having entered in fierce Cancer’s sign,
The sun brought heat intense, unusual,
To his soldiers adverse, and to his own design,
As rendering labour insupportable.

LIII

Spent are the heavens’ benignant, friendly lamps,
And baleful meteors lord it in the sky,
Whence rains a blighting influence, that stamps
On air the seal of its malignant die ;
The noxious heat increases, and aye breeds
On every side mortality more keen ;
To deadly day more deadly night succeeds,
And days still worse are in succession seen.

LIV

The sun ne'er rises, that, o'ershadowed now
With blood-red mists which in and round it play,
It shows not clearly, in its angry brow,
The presage sad of an unhappy day ;
Nor sets, that, with red blotches overcast,
At its return it threatens not equal doom,
Embittering thus their sufferings of the past,
With certain dread of sufferings yet to come.

LV

And when it pours its radiance from on high,
Around, as far as mortal eye can stray,
The leaves are seen to fade, the flowers to die,
The parched-up grass to wither and decay ;
Water to 'minish, the cracked earth to gape,
Nor is there aught that 'scapes heaven's burning ire ;
The barren clouds in air assume the shape
And awful semblance of great globes of fire.

LVI

A lurid furnace seems the leaden sky,
Nor to refresh the sight doth aught appear ;
Still in their grots the slumbering zephyrs lie,
Hushed altogether is each breath of air ;
Alone, as if from blazing torch, there blows
Sirocco's blast from Mauritanian sands,
Whose stifling breath more dense each moment grows,
And strikes and suffocates the Christian bands.

LVII

No longer grateful fall the shades of night,
But with the sun's full glare imprinted seem;
Inwrought her mantle is with comets bright,
With many a meteor flash, and fiery beam;
Nor to thy thirst, sad earth! her dewy showers
Concedes the miser moon. Thro' all the plain,
The withered herbage, the exhausted flowers
Long for their vital moisture, but in vain.

LVIII

From restless nights sweet slumber exiled flies,
Nor can faint mortals call it back; repose
Comes not, though fondly courted, to their eyes;
But thirst is still the greatest of their woes:
Since with inhuman craft Judæa's king
Did with the fountains deadly poison mix,
And thus more black and turbid made each spring
Than the infernal Acheron or Styx.

LIX

And little Siloë, whose crystal tide
Erst to the Franks its grateful treasures spread,
Now but a scant restorative supplied;
Its tepid waters scarce conceal its bed;
Nor had appeared superfluous to their want,
The Po in May, when it profoundest grows,
Nor Ganges, nor the Nile, when, not content
With its seven homes, it Egypt overflows.

LX

If any e'er thro' shady banks had seen
Pure molten silver stagnate in a lake,
Or living water dash down Alps between,
Or its calm course thro' flowery meadows take ;
These in fond fancy they once more behold,
They furnish fresh material for their pain ;
Their image, so refreshing and so cold,
Parches their lips and parboils in their brain.

LXI

The limbs of manliest, stoutest cavaliers,
That proof 'gainst journey o'er the roughest road,
'Gainst weight of armour, proof 'gainst levelled spears
Of cruel foemen thirsting for their blood,
Relaxed and melted by the burning heat,
Now to themselves a useless burden lay,
While in their veins lurk secret fires, that eat
By slow degrees their very life away.

LXII

The war-horse languishes, so fierce before,
And loathes the grass, his former dearest food ;
His faint limbs totter, the proud crest he bore
Droops to the ground dejected and subdued ;
No longer mindful of his victories,
Nor with the love of glory more elate,
His victor trappings and embroideries
He now despises as ignoble weight.

LXIII

The faithful dog, too, languishes ; all care
Of home and lord forgotten as he lies
Panting, outstretched, and with fresh draughts of air
To mitigate his inward fever tries ;
For if boon Nature respiration gave,
To temper heat's excessive vehemence,
Now it can none or small refreshment have,
Since this they breathe so heavy is and dense.

LXIV

Thus pined the earth ; in such condition lay
Its wretched sons, consumed by burning thirst ;
And the good, faithful host, despairing they
Of victory now, anticipate the worst.
On every side lamenting voices pour
Their loud complaints with simultaneous breath :
' What hopes for Godfred ? Why delays he more,
Till all the camp is swallowed up by death ?

LXV

' Ah ! with what forces doth he hope to gain
The strong defences of our enemies ?
Whence arms expect ? Doth he alone disdain
To see Heaven's wrath revealed in signs like these ?
A thousand prodigies, a thousand signs,
How adverse is the Almighty mind assure ;
On us the sun with such fierce fervour shines,
Less needs relief the Indian or the Moor.

LXVI

To him, insensible ! imports it not
That we advance unto a death of pain ;
Vile, useless beings, slighted and forgot,
That he forsooth his royal power maintain !
What ! is it then such happiness to reign,
That he with so much eagerness should try
The pomp and ease of kingship to retain,
While thus around his subject-people die ?

LXVII

‘ Behold the piteous care and mind humane
Of him who bears the name of Pious—yet,
An empty, dangerous honour to retain,
Doth thus the safety of his troops forget ;
And, seeing for us the founts and river dry,
For its cool crystal to the Jordan sends,
And at gay feasts, in joyous company,
The wines of Crete with its fresh water blends.’

LXVIII

Thus the Franks murmured. But the Grecian chief,
Already tired their standard to pursue,
Exclaimed : ‘ Why here expire without relief ?
Why witness thus my people perish too ?
If, in his madness, Godfred be so blind,
Let him and his the consequences rue ;
What’s that to us ?’ Nor would he stay behind
Ev’n to take leave, but in the night withdrew.

LXIX

Contagious was the precedent, and far
As daylight showed, the rank infection spread.
Those whom Clotharius had, and Ademar,
And the other chiefs, now bones and ashes, led,
Now that the Power, which all dissolves, had freed
Them from their sworn allegiance, talk of flight ;
Nay some, the more adventurous, succeed
In flying under cover of the night.

LXX

These facts were heard and noted by the chief,
Who by harsh measures could have all repressed :
But these he abhorred ; and, with that firm belief
Which can make mountains move and rivers rest,
To God raised up devotionate appeal,
That he would ope the fountain of his grace.
He clasped his hands, and, rapt with fervent zeal,
To Heaven addressed his words and beaming face :

LXXI

‘ Father and Lord ! if, in the desert, thou
Didst on thy people sweet refreshment rain,
Or mortal hands didst with the power endow
Hard rocks to rive, and living streams obtain
From the cleft stone,—to us do not deny
Like love ; and if unequal be our claim,
Do our deficiency by grace supply,
Nor let us vainly plead who bear thy name.’

LXXII

No lagging course his pious prayers pursue,
Since sprung from humble and so just desire,
But prompt and light through heaven's crystallin flew,
Like winged birds, unto their God. The Sire
Eternal heard, and on His faithful host
Cast down a tender and compassionate look ;
And, grieving for their toils and numbers lost,
In these benignant, friendly accents spoke :

LXXIII

' Tho' my loved camp may have suffered till this hour
Painful and perilous adversity,
Though hell with all its secret arts and power,
And though the world against it armèd be,
Now a new state of fortune shall begin,
And turn its grief to joy. Let rain fall down,
Return its own unconquered paladin,
And Egypt's host arrive—his fame to crown.'

LXXIV

He ceased, and bowed his head ;—then shook the sky;
The stars and wandering planets felt the spell;
Trembled the reverent air, the mountains high,
The fields of ocean, and the abyss of hell ;
Leftwards forked lightning flashed, and with it pealed
Loud claps of thunder through the lowering skies.
Each flash, each peal, the gladdened army hailed
With joyful clamour and exulting cries.

LXXV

Lo ! sudden clouds, and they not earthly born,
Or upwards drawn by virtue of the sun,
But from high heaven—which had asunder torn
Its mighty gates—fall, rushing swiftly down.
Lo ! sudden night the light of day enchains
Within its shade, that all around is spread ;
Succeeded by such fierce, impetuous rains,
That Siloë now o'erleaps his narrow bed.

LXXVI

As in midsummer's season, if the shower
So pined, so longed for, from the heavens descend,
In fond impatience of the welcome hour,
By arid streams hoarse chattering ducks attend,
Spreading their pinions to the grateful cool ;
None from the clear, refreshing moisture blench,
And, where the gathering freshet forms a pool,
Plunge in its depths their burning thirst to quench ;

LXXVII

So these salute with screams of wild delight
The falling rain, that with compassionate hand
God sent His faithful people to requite.
Uncloaked, nay more, unhelmeted, all stand ;
This drinks from glass, that with his helmet vies,
These keep their hands immersed beneath the rill ;
Some bathe their throbbing temples, some their eyes ;
Vessels, for better use, the crafty fill.

LXXVIII

And not alone the human race is glad,
Its previous waste rejoicing to restore ;
But the parched earth, that was so faint, so sad,
And in its limbs such gaping fissures bore,
Sucks in the moisture, and unites once more ;
And spreads it thence throughout its inmost veins,
Supplying largely each exhausted flower,
Each herb and plant with heaven's nutritious rains :

LXXIX

Resembling sickly girl whose fever was
By vital draughts and cordial balms subdued,
Whence, disencumbered of the fatal cause
That made her limbs its appetising food,
As fresh and as recruited she becomes
As in the season of her greatest charms,
And now, forgetting her past ills, resumes
Her robes, her garlands, and all beauty's arms.

LXXX

The rains now cease ; the sun returns at length,
But with a genial and attempered ray,
As it is wont, replete with virile strength,
At the end of April or the birth of May.
O gentle faith ! alone thy virtue can
The air's death-bearing poison dissipate,
Can change the seasons' order and their plan,
Thwart the stars' influence, and discomfit Fate.



CANTO XIV.

I

NOW issuing from her mother's womb, the night
O'er heaven and earth her sable shadows threw ;
Bearer she was of zephyrs passing light,
And of big showers of pure and precious dew ;
Shaking the humid border of her veil,
She with its drops the grass and flowers impearled ;
And flapping his glad wings the gentle gale,
Fanned the soft slumbers of the sleeping world.

II

And all the cares on day attendant, night
Had in refreshing deep oblivion drowned ;
But, watching from his throne of endless light,
The world's great monarch sat, and, turning round,
Fixed on the Christian army's chief supreme
His sympathetic and propitious eye ;
Then sent as harbinger a joyous dream,
His high and sovran will to signify.

III

There stands in the orient a crystallin door,
Near those gold gates from which in full array
The sun comes forth, and which is oped before
Unbarred's the portal for the rising day ;
From it proceed those dreams the Almighty sends
To pure unsullied minds by special grace ;
Thence one to pious Godfred now descends,
And spreads its golden pinions in his face.

IV

No vision e'er in wildest dreams disclosed
Such fair, such pleasing picture to the eye,
As this which to their inmost depths exposed
The secrets of the stars and of the sky ;
In which, as in a mirror, he can see
In all their splendour their contents displayed ;
He seemed transported to a galaxy,
A white serene in golden flames arrayed.

V

And while he did in that high place admire
The expanse, the motion, harmony, and light,
Lo ! girt with sunbeams, girt with radiant fire,
That almost blinded him, approached a knight,
Who spoke with voice to which would harsh appear
The sweetest upon earth. ' Godfred,' he cries,
' What ! hast no words or welcome for thy dear
And faithful friend ? nor Hugo recognise ?'

VI

Prince Godfred answered him : ‘ That new aspèct,
Which, like a sun, miraculously burns,
Has so diverted my dazed intellect
From its old ken, that slowly it returns.’
Thrice, then, his arms around his neck he cast,
Transported by affection and esteem,
And thrice the spirit, vainly circled, passed
Like unsubstantial air, or subtile dream.

VII

He smiled and said : ‘ Not, as thou deem’st, do I
An earthly robe of fleshy fabric wear ;
An immaterial form thou dost descry,
And blissful tenant of the heavenly sphere.
This is God’s temple, here his knights abide,
And here thou, too, shalt come, O cavalier.’
‘ When will that be ? These mortal bonds,’ he cried,
‘ Loose, if they hinder my remaining here.’

VIII

‘ Soon shalt thou be accepted,’ Hugo said,
‘ To share the fame of the triumphant ; yet,
Ere that occur, ’tis fated thou must shed,
Down on yon plain below, much blood and sweat :
Thou must the empire of the Holy Land
Wrest from the Pagan first, and then ordain
A Christian kingdom, where, with puissant hand,
Thy younger brother may hereafter reign.

IX

‘ But that more vivified be thy desires
For love of heavenly things, more close behold
These lucid mansions and these living fires,
By mind eternal quickened and controlled ;
The seraph notes of syren minstrels hear,
Hear their celestial lyres’ immortal strains.’
Then said, and pointed to earth’s distant sphere,
‘ Look down and see what yonder globe contains.

X

‘ How mean, how abject, are the causes there,
That prompt man’s valour and his actions guide !
And what scant compass, and what deserts bare,
Confine his puny and ignoble pride !
It as an isle the circling sea surrounds,
And ill doth your vast ocean correspond
With the high title of those wordy sounds ;
’Tis but a wretched marsh, a stagnant pond.’

XI

As thus the spirit spoke, the cavalier
Looked down and smiled, as if in scorn to see,
Dwarfed to a point, the land and sea, that here
Preserve their individuality ;
Astonished how to shadows and to smoke
Perverse mortality affix their eyes,
Seeking mute fame and servile power, nor look
To God, who calls—who bids them to the skies.

XII

Whence he : ‘ Since yet it pleaseth not thy God
Me from this earthly prison to set free,
I pray thee show the path that may be trod
Most safely in this labyrinth by me.’
‘ That,’ replied Hugo, ‘ is the real way
Thou treadest now ; depart not from its track :
Alone I counsel thee, without delay,
Bertoldo’s son from exile to call back.

XIII

‘ Since if high Providence elected thee
Commander of this emprise, he ordained,
Of thy designs, that Prince Rinaldo be
Supreme executor : to thee He deigned
The foremost part, to him the second place ;
Thou art the head, and he the camp’s right hand ;
Nor could another that bold knight replace,
And ’twere not right thou in his post shouldst stand.

XIV

‘ For he alone will be allowed to hew
The wood, defended by such magic charms ;
From him the camp’s desponding residue,
That seem unable to resume their arms,
Nay, much more likely to retire, will all
For new emprises have their zeal increased ;
Thro’ him they’ll overcome the strengthened wall,
Thro’ him the powerful army of the East.’

XV

He ceased, and Bouillon said : ‘ How dear to me
Were the return of that illustrious youth ;
Thou, who dost all my thoughts most secret see,
Know’st if I love him and declare the truth.
What offers should I make ? and in what lands
Should I—ah, tell me !—trace his errant flight ?
Will’st thou I send entreaties or commands ?
And how were that legitimate and right ? ’

XVI

‘ The Eternal King,’ the spirit then replied,
‘ Who with such favour honours thee, doth will
That they o’er whom ’tis given thee to preside,
Shall honour, reverence, and respect thee still ;
But sue not thou ; perhaps request from thee,
The sovran chief, derogatory were ;
But yield when asked, and stoop to clemency
At the first summons of thy comrades’ prayer.

XVII

‘ Guelph, whose kind heart the Almighty will inspire,
Will pray thee pardon the rash boy’s offence,
Which he gave way to from excess of ire,
That to his post of honour at the tents
He may return ; and tho’ in love’s soft maze
And wanton ease, the youth now doting lies,
Doubt not he will, ere lapse of many days,
Arrive in well-timed season for the emprise.

XVIII

‘ Since your sage Peter, to whom Heaven imparts
Of its dark secrets cognisance profound,
Will know to guide the messengers to parts
Where of him certain tidings will be found,
And will be shown them both the means and power
To lead him back the distant seas across ;
And thus Heaven’s favour will at length restore
Thy errant comrades to the sacred Cross.

XIX

‘ Conclude I now will with intelligence
That unto thee will lively pleasure bring :
His blood shall mingle with thine own, from whence
A great illustrious progeny shall spring.’
This said, he vanished like a wreath of smoke
Before the wind, or cloud before the sun :
The startling news the prince’s slumbers broke,
And did his heart with joy and stupor stun.

XX

At this he opened his bewildered eyes,
And seeing the day had some time risen, sprung
From off his couch, and, making haste to rise,
Upon his wearied limbs his armour flung.
To him soon afterwards the leaders went,
Since they were aye accustomed to repair
And meet for council in the captain’s tent,
Where all was planned that was performed elsewhere.

XXI

Here generous Guelpho, as the novel plan
Worked in his Heaven-inspired, magnanimous mind,
First of all those that sat around, began,
Saying to Godfred : ' Prince most just and kind,
I come to ask for pardon, which, 'tis true,
Is pardon for a crime of recent date ;
Whence the demand, perhaps, for which I sue
May seem ill-timed and too precipitate.

XXII

' But when I think the pardon we require
Is for Rinaldo, from the pious chief,
And that myself, who ask the favour, sire,
Am no mean intercessor, my belief
Is that, with ease, I shall this grace obtain,
A boon to all productive of great good.
Let him return, and, to wipe out this stain,
Shed for the common weal his precious blood.

XXIII

' Who but himself, with strength and zeal replete,
Dare fell the forest that has cowed the rest ?
Who death encounter, and its dangers meet
With more intrepid and determined breast ?
You'll see him barriers prostrate, ramparts shake,
Mount the breach singly foremost of us all.
Him to the camp restore, for Jesus' sake ;
Our cherished idol, our high hope recall.

XXIV

‘To me a nephew, to thyself restore
An agent prompt to fend and to attack ;
Ah, let him sleep in vile repose no more,
But to himself his former fame give back ;
Ah, let him follow thy victorious arm,
And let the world the noble stripling see
Achievements worthy of himself perform,
In admiration, peerless chief, of thee.’

XXV

Thus he entreated, and the others rent
The air with shouts Rinaldo to restore.
Whence Godfred said, as if his mind was bent
On things not thought of or conceived before :
‘How were it possible, where all unite
As with one voice, my pardon to refuse ?
Let rigour yield, and that be law and right
Which the desire expressed by all doth choose.’

XXVI

‘Let him return, but from henceforward rein
With tighter bridle his impetuous ire,
And the great hopes conceived of him sustain
By deeds that may respond to our desire.
Him to recall, O Guelpho, be thy care ;
Nor do I think he’ll loiter o’er the ground :
Choose, then, an envoy, and direct him where
Thou deem’st the froward stripling may be found.’

XXVII

Ceasing, the Danish warrior rose and said :
‘ To be the chosen envoy I demand ;
Nor path so long, so doubtful do I dread,
To place the honoured sabre in his hand.’
His offer greatly pleased Prince Guelph, for he
Had heart and hand no trials ever bent.
He wills him one, and that the other be
Ubaldo—cautious, crafty, provident :

XXVIII

For he had sought and seen in youthful prime
Variety of manners and of lands,
In journeying from the most inclement clime
Of this our world to Ethiop’s burning sands ;
And, like one buying knowledge for himself,
Had learned their language, usages, and rites ;
In riper years was then received by Guelph,
And dearest deemed of his companion knights.

XXIX

On such a pair the honoured duty falls
The knight to summon from his lone retreat ;
And Guelph directed them to those far walls
In which Boëmondo has his royal seat ;
Since from report, and general credence too,
They deemed the illustrious paladin was there :
But Peter, who the wrong directions knew,
Cut short their talk, and, with commanding air,

XXX

‘ Sir knights, pursuing the report,’ he cried,
‘ Of common lying rumour, ye pursue
A rash, deceitful, and insidious guide,
That will mislead you from the proper clue.
Haste ye to Ascalon’s adjacent shores,
Where a stream enters the deep ocean’s brine ;
There ye will meet with a great friend of ours ;
Him trust—his sentiments are one with mine.

XXXI

‘ Much has he seen himself, much heard from me,
Of your foreseen adventurous emprise ;
Long since I made it known to him, and he,
I know, is kind and courteous as he is wise.’
Thus spake the sage ; nor Carlo questioned more,
Nor did his brother envoy hesitate,
But promptly both obeyed those words, whose lore
Heaven was itself accustomed to dictate.

XXXII

They then took leave ; and zeal so spurred them on,
That off they started, and began to make,
Quick as they could, their way to Ascalon,
Upon whose coast the adjacent billows break ;
Nor had they heard as yet the hollow roar
Announce the presence of the sounding main,
When they a river reached whose waters tore
Madly along, and were so swollen by rain,

XXXIII

That ev'n its bed could not contain the flood,
Which with more fleetness than an arrow ran.
While thus perplexed they were, before them stood
A worthy venerable-looking man,
With beech leaves crowned, and clad in simple suit,
Woven of snowy flax. He shook a rod,
And 'gainst the current with unmoistened foot
Securely on the unyielding water trod.

XXXIV

As near the pole in distant northern lands,
When winter's frosts the flowing streams congeal,
Upon the Rhine the village girls in bands
Whisk o'er the surface with reliant heel ;
Thus on the soft unstable soil did he
Of those not hard or frozen waters tread,
And soon arrived where the knights fixedly
Their eyes on him had bent, to whom he said :

XXXV

' A toilsome, hard inquiry ye pursue,
And in great need of other guidance stand ;
Since, friends, the knight ye seek is far from you
In heathen and inhospitable lands.
Much—oh, how much !—remains to gain this end :
What seas to cross ! what vast extent of shores !
For, know, your search is destined to extend
Beyond the confines of this world of ours.

XXXVI

‘ But enter, an ye please, my hidden cave,
And I will you my secret dwelling show,
Where matters ye shall hear of import grave,
And what is requisite ye both should know.’
He ceased, and bade the yielding lymph give place,
Which straight retired and hung on either side,
Like a curved mountain beetling o’er its base,
And thus a pathway to the knights supplied.

XXXVII

Taking them by the hand, he led each knight
Down to the lowest depths beneath the stream,
Where faintly glimmered an unsteady light,
Like that in woods, ere full is Cynthia’s beam ;
Pregnant with water, spacious caves they spied,
Whence rise those teeming veins that thro’ the land
Leap into fountains, into rivers glide,
In marshes stagnate, or in lakes expand.

XXXVIII

They saw the springs of Danube and the Po,
Whence Ganges and Hydaspes take their course,
Whence Tanais and swift Euphrates flow,
Nor hid the Nile its dark mysterious source.
Still deeper they another river found,
That living sulphur and quicksilver rolled,
Which by the sun were purified, and bound
In solid piles of silver and of gold.

XXXIX

The margin starred with many a precious stone,
Along that teeming river they beheld ;
Whence, as if lit with myriad flambeaux, shone
The spot, and was the horrid gloom dispelled.
There sparkled, with heaven's blue cerulean light,
Celestial sapphire and the jacinth ; there
Glowed the carbuncle, blazed the diamond bright,
And emeralds smiled, the fairest of the fair.

XL

Still on, bewildered, the two warriors went,
With thoughts so rapt with what they had descried,
That both were speechless from astonishment ;
At length Ubaldo thus addressed their guide :
' Tell us, O father, where we are, and where
Thou leadest us ; say who and what thou art.
Do I dream or fancy ? What these marvels are
I know not ; stupor so confounds my heart.'

XLI

' Ye,' he replied, ' are in the spacious womb
Of mother Earth, that all things doth create ;
Nor can ye more into her bowels' gloom,
Without my aid and guidance, penetrate.
I lead you to my palace home, a place
Which soon ye'll see illumed with wondrous lights ;
A Pagan I was born, but thro' God's grace
Was made regenerate by baptismal rites.

XLII

‘ Yet think not I by aid of imps of hell
Perform the miracles ye gaze upon ;
Nay, God forbid I should use sign or spell
To force Cocytus or dark Phlegethon :
But to their inmost springs I scrutinise
The latent virtues of each herb, each source ;
I study Nature’s unknown mysteries,
And watch the stars in their erratic course ;

XLIII

‘ For, know, not always far from heaven’s bright zone,
Live I in gloomy subterranean cell,
But oft, on Carmel and Mount Lebanon,
In most aerial habitation dwell ;
There Mars and Venus their true nature show
To me, unveiled in every turn and phase ;
I see the others roll, now swift, now slow,
If threatening or benignant be their rays.

XLIV

‘ And ’neath my feet mark clouds now dense, now rare,
Now black, now painted by the heavenly bow ;
Behold how dews and rains created are,
And how the rushing winds transversely blow ;
How lightnings kindle, and when hurled from high,
Their path how tortuous ; and at length began,
Beholding stars and other fires so nigh,
Myself to view as something more than man.

XLV

‘ Yes, so o’erweening grew my pride, that I
Deemed my extensive knowledge was the true
Unerring gage of what the Deity,
The great Creator of the world, could do ;
But when your Peter had bedewed my hair,
Washed my polluted soul in Jordan’s stream,
My thoughts exalted, and made me aware
How dark, how blind was my presumptuous dream ;

XLVI

‘ Then, then I knew, like owlet in the sun
Is man’s poor mind before eternal Truth ;
I smiled at all the follies I had done,
And at the haught self-confidence of youth ;
But still I follow my old customs, as
The sage desires, and, tho’ unchanged in limb,
Am now a different man to what I was,
Since I look up to and depend on him :

XLVII

‘ In him I rest, he teaches and commands,
My sovran lord, my guide and master, who
Actions at times deserving of his hands
Scorns not through my poor agency to do.
Now, ’tis my charge from his captivity
Back to the camp the unconquered knight to lead,
Since he ordained it ; and long time have I
Looked for your coming, as by him decreed.’

XLVIII

While thus conversing with the knights, he gained
The spot that formed his hermit-like retreat.
Shaped like a grot, it in itself contained
Galleries and halls, capacious and complete ;
All that the earth in her rich veins comprised,
Did there its full magnificence impart ;
And every ornament was so disguised,
That it seemed work of Nature not of Art.

XLIX

Pages in hundreds were not wanting there
To serve the guests, and, dazzling to behold,
On gorgeous tables of pure silver were
Large vases ranged of crystal and of gold.
But soon as sated were their appetites
And quenched their thirst, the old magician cried :
' High time it is, you bold adventurous knights,
That your still greater wants be satisfied.'

L

And thus continued : ' Ye all know in part
The schemes and tricks Armida introduced ;
How to the camp she came, and by what art
So many knights to follow her seduced ;
Ye know how, after that, she, faithless host,
Fettered and then despatched her captive prey,
Under strong escort, to far Gaza's coast,
And how they were delivered on the way.

LI

‘ Now I will tell you of what happened then,
And, tho’ ye know it not, the tale is true.
Soon as her prey, by such devices ta’en,
Retaken was, the wicked sorceress knew ;
Both hands she bit—so mortified, so crost—
And to herself, inflamed with malice, said :
“ Ah, it shall ne’er be true—he ne’er shall boast
To have so many of my captives freed.

LII

“ If he freed others, let him keep and bear
The pain reserved for others—others’ thrall ;
Nor yet shall this suffice ; I would, I swear,
One general ruin could ingulph them all.”
Thus fuming, she, with unexampled spite,
Plotted the unjust fraud which ye shall hear.
She went to where Rinaldo had in fight
Vanquished and partly slain her escort ; here

LIII

‘ He having left his arms upon the field,
A Turk’s had substituted for his own,
Perhaps because he wished to go concealed
Beneath device less famous and less known.
The enchantress seized his armour, and inclosed
In it a headless mutilated bust,
Which on the river’s margent she exposed,
Where she foreknew pass by the Christians must.

LIV

‘ Nor was this knowledge difficult, since she,
From scouts employed by her in thousands, learned
News of the Frank encampment frequently,
And who from thence departed and returned.
Besides, she often with dark spirits spoke,
And did with them for lengthened periods dwell.
She placed the corse then in a certain nook,
That for her base design seemed suited well.

LV

‘ And a smart varlet in the adjoining wood
Stationed to watch, in shepherd’s garb arrayed,
And drilled him both what say and do he should
In that feigned guise ; and was in all obeyed.
He spoke with yours, and in them sowed that seed
Of dark unjust suspicion, which, thence fed,
Bore broils and civil discords, and indeed
Had almost to intestine warfare led.

LVI

‘ Since all believed, as she, designing, feigned,
That Godfred ’twas who killed the gallant youth,
Albeit suspicion, wrongly entertained,
Fled when confronted with the light of truth.
This was the first, most cunning stratagem
Framed by Armida, which ye now have heard ;
How then the fair enchantress followed him,
I’ll tell you, with what afterwards occurred.

LVII

‘ She for Rinaldo at the passage waits
Like cautious huntress. He at the Orontes lights,
Where in two parts the river separates,
And, having formed an isle, again unites :
A marble column on the bank he spies,
Near which lay moored a shallop ; he proceeds,
And, fixing on its workmanship his eyes,
In golden characters engraven reads :

LVIII

“ Whoe’er thou art whom choice or fortune guides
In pilgrimage to this enchanting coast,
No greater marvel than this islet hides
Can the east or west throughout its confines boast ;
Cross, if thou wilt its paradise behold.”
He on the impulse yields, now curious grown ;
But since the boat could not his esquires hold,
He leaves them there, and passes o’er alone.

LIX

‘ Arrived, with eager and enquiring glance
He gazed around, yet nothing there perceived
But grottoes, fountains, herbage, flowers, and plants,
From which he fancied he had been deceived.
But still the spot so lured him and so charmed,
That he seemed spell-bound by the attractions there ;
And, sitting down, his glowing brow disarmed,
To bathe it in the soft refreshing air.

LX

‘ Meanwhile he heard, and thither bent his eyes,
The river gurgle in unusual strain,
And saw a wave in the stream’s centre rise,
Which, in itself, whirled round and round again ;
Whence just peeped forth a lock of golden hair,
Then lovely face of youthful damsel rose,
Then neck and breasts, and of her form to where
Shame round the rest her decent mantle throws.

LXI

‘ Thus, slowly rising from the stage at night,
A goddess, or some fairy nymph appears.
This, tho’ no siren, but a magic sprite,
Might pass for one of those, in bygone years,
That dwelt within the smooth, insidious sea,
Near the Etrurian shore : her face as fair,
Nor less enchanting the sweet melody
She sang, and charmed the listening skies and air

LXII

“ Thrice happy youth ! while April and sweet May
Your glowing brow with flowery garlands bind,
Ah ! let not tinsel Fame’s fallacious ray,
Or specious Virtue, lure your tender mind ;
Who plucks the fruit each season’s change supplies,
And follows pleasure, as the good most choice,
Heeds Nature’s dictates, and alone is wise ;
And will you steel yourself ’gainst Nature’s voice ?

LXIII

“Why cast, insensate, the dear boon away,
Of life’s gold prime, that is so brief on earth?
Mere names, and empty idols of a day,
Are what the world calls fortitude and worth.
Fame, which you haughty mortals would persuade
With witching voice, and which appears so fair,
An echo is—a dream—nay, a dream’s shade,
Dispersed, like smoke, by the first breath of air.

LXIV

“Enjoy your lives ; with pleasing objects let
Your tranquil spirits the frail senses fill ;
Bygone annoyance in new joys forget ;
Nor hasten woes, anticipating ill ;
Heedless of lightning’s flash or thunder’s strife,
Let at its will Heaven all its wrath display :
This wisdom is, this is a happy life ;
Thus Nature teaches, thus points out the way.”

LXV

‘Thus sang that traitress ; lulling into sleep
The youth, by spell of her voluptuous strain.
Little by little gentle slumbers creep,
And o’er his senses such strong mastery gain,
That thunder now had not the sleeper woke
From that calm image of Sleep’s sister—Death.
Forth from her ambush, then, the false witch broke,
And o’er him stood, with vengeance-quicken’d breath.

LXVI

‘ But when she had fixed her gaze on him awhile,
And saw how placidly the youth reposed,
And in his eyes such sweet expression smile,
Tho’ sealed by sleep, (what were they if unclosed?)
Perplexed at first, she paused, then sat down near,
And felt—beholding one so fair, so young—
All trace of her resentment disappear,
As o’er his brow Narcissus-like she hung.

LXVII

‘ And, gathering in her veil the delicate
And living pearls that on his forehead rise,
Essayed, by fanning him, to mitigate
The glowing fervour of midsummer skies.
Thus (who would credit it?) the heat suppressed
In his closed eyes dissolved the mass of snow
That, hard as adamant, congealed her breast,
And lover she became, in place of foe.

LXVIII

‘ With privet, then, with lily and the rose,
That flowered profusely on those pleasant plains,
Did she with skill entwine, and thence compose
Pliant, but strong and most unyielding, chains.
These round his neck, and arms, and feet she laced,
Thus bound, and thus secured her captive prize;
Whom, as he slept, upon her car she placed
And thence transported thro’ the liquid skies;

LXIX

‘ Nor to Damascus’ realms returned, nor where
Secure her wave-encircled castle lay ;
Since, jealous of a pledge so very dear,
And of her love ashamed, she fled away,
And hid herself in the unbounded sea,
Where ship from us or ne’er or rarely goes ;
And there, long past our farthest confines, she,
For her retreat, a little island chose.

LXX

‘ An isle which, with the neighbouring islets, takes
Its name from Fortune : there the enamoured maid
At once her way to a high mountain makes,
All uninhabited, and dark with shade.
By magic she then cast a snowy band
Around its sides and spurs, but left the peak
Snowless, and on that verdant table-land
A princely palace built beside a lake ;

LXXI

‘ Where, in perpetual April, the fond pair
Each others’ sweet society enjoy.
Now from that distant and secluded lair,
Tis yours to drag the infatuated boy,
And the guards conquer of the jealous fair,
Who both the palace and the mount defend ;
Nor will be wanting one to guide you there,
Nor arms, for the great enterprise, to lend.

LXXII

‘ Scarce issued from the river, ye will find
A damsel, young in face but old in years,
Known by the hair around her forehead twined,
And by the party-coloured robe she wears.
She will conduct you thro’ the soundless main,
Swifter than eagle’s wings the air divide,
Or lightnings flash ; and, coming back again,
In her ye’ll find a no less faithful guide.

LXXIII

‘ At the hill’s foot where dwells the enchantress, ye
Will hear outlandish crawling pythons hiss ;
Curling their bristling backs, wild boars ye’ll see,
And bears and lions ope their jaws’ abyss ;
But shaking this, my own enchanter-wand,
They’ll fear to approach its sound. Yet, judging right,
A far, far greater trial lies beyond,
Which ye’ll encounter on the mountain’s height.

LXXIV

‘ There from a fountain such pure water steals,
That to behold it causes thirst intense ;
But deep in its cold crystal it conceals
A poison of such secret virulence,
That of its lucid waves the smallest drop
The soul intoxicates, and man inspires
To laugh so, that at last he cannot stop,
But laughs, and laughs, till laughing he expires. o

LXXV

‘ Far from its homicidal waters turn
Disdainfully your lips ; the banquet laid
Upon the water’s mossy margent, spurn,
Nor let the tongue of treacherous girls persuade,
Whose siren voices, and soft eloquent eyes,
Possess such tempting, such destructive baits ;
But both their looks and blandishments despise,
And enter boldly through the lofty gates.

LXXVI

‘ Within, all’s masked by tortuous walls from view,
That in themselves a complex labyrinth make ;
For this, on parchment, I will give the clue,
So that the road ye cannot well mistake :
In centre of the maze a garden lies,
That breathes forth love from every leaf, and here,
On the green carpet of its paradise,
Ye’ll find the damsel and the cavalier.

LXXVII

‘ But as she, leaving her dear lover, strays
To other parts, I will that ye surprise
The wanton youth by showing yourselves, and raise
The diamond shield I’ll give before his eyes ;
That seeing himself in his true naked light,
And the effeminate garb in which he’s drest,
Shame and remorse at such reproachful sight
May drive the unworthy passion from his breast.

LXXVIII

‘ Superfluous ’twere that I should more dilate,
Save that in perfect safety ye may go,
And to the parts most secret penetrate
Of the intricate edifice ; for know,
Not all the power of sorcery can bar,
Not ev’n delay your journey, nor can she,
Since guided by such influence ye are,
Be able your arrival to foresee.

LXXIX

‘ Nor less securely from the enchanted halls
Shall ye retire and take your homeward way ;
But now the hour to gentle slumber calls,
And ye must rise to-morrow with the day.’
He ceased, and led the noble envoys where
They could their senses in night’s lethe steep ;
And having left the pleased but pensive pair,
The gentle sage retired himself to sleep.



CANTO XV.

I

ALREADY to their toils the dawn's first lights
Had called earth's habitants, when prompt the old
And friendly sage came to the warrior knights,
Bringing the chart, the shield, and wand of gold ;
And said : ' Prepare for your great journey ere
The breaking day mount higher in the skies ;
Here are the spells I promised you, and here
All that the witch's charms can exorcise.'

II

Already they had risen, already they
Their stalwart limbs in armour had arrayed,
And, by paths never lighted by the day,
The old man followed thro' the gloomy shade ;
And the same footmarks 'gan again retread,
That on their coming first imprinted were ;
But on arriving at the river's bed,
' Success be yours,' he cried ; ' I leave you here.'

III

Them in its buoyant breast the stream receives,
And bears up gently to the surface ; so
Are wont to rise up from the bottom leaves
That violent eddies have forced down below.
Thus to the humid bank they now return,
Where they the escort promised them behold ;
The little bark is there, and in its stern
The fatal damsel that its course controlled.

IV

Her hair voluminous round her forehead lies,
Most heavenly is her aspect, and as fair
As angel's are her calm propitious eyes,
Such radiant lustre burns and sparkles there ;
Her robe you'd call now crimson and now blue,
As at each moment with new colours lit,
So that you see it wear a different hue
As oft as you return to look at it.

V

Thus the gay plumage, which at times we view
Encircling amorous turtle's delicate neck,
Ne'er for a moment keeps the self-same hue,
But from the sun doth countless colours take ;
Of burning rubies it now necklace seems,
Now with the green of softer emerald vies,
Now all confused in one bright iris beams,
And in a hundred ways delights the eyes.

VI

‘Enter this bark, O favoured pair!’ she cries,
‘In which I safely cross the sounding main;
’Gainst it no storms spring up, no tempests rise;
The heaviest weights it can with ease sustain.
My gracious lord, unsparing of his grace,
Me sends as escort to conduct you o’er.’
Thus spake the damsel, and began to place
The graceful shallop nearer to the shore.

VII

When safely had embarked the noble pair,
She slacks the bit, and leaves the river’s sides;
And having spread the canvas to the air,
Sits at the rudder, and the vessel guides.
So swoln the torrent was, its back would seem
Able to carry ships however great;
But this so light was, any other stream,
However slightly increased, had borne its weight.

VIII

Swifter, far swifter, than their natural way,
The breezes drive the vessel towards the shore
Around its prow the sea is blanched with spray,
And in its wake the broken billows roar.
Lo! they now reach a spacious estuary,
Whose larger bed the river calms, since here,
Merged in the vast abysses of the sea,
It nought becomes, at least doth naught appear.

IX

Scarce did the enchanted vessel touch the mouth
Of the great troubled deep that roared and rolled,
Than disappeared the clouds, and from the south
Ceased the strong blasts that had a storm foretold ;
Planed was each mountain wave by zephyrs mild,
That only curled its fair cerulean breast ;
And heaven, a sweet serene diffusing, smiled,
Nor ever had a calmer look possessed.

X

They passed by Ascalon, and westward steered
The little vessel thro' the halcyon sea,
And soon the famous town of Gaza neared,
Which was the port of Gaza formerly ;
Increasing then, on others' fall, it rose
Into a city powerful, great, and grand,
Whose teeming plains and swarming shores disclose
Almost as many men as grains of sand.

XI

The travellers, looking towards the land, descry
Of fluttering tents illimitable store ;
Distinguish cavalry and infantry
Pass to and fro from city to the shore ;
Camels and elephants great weights transport,
Beneath whose tread the sandy paths subside ;
And in the deep recesses of the port
View the moored vessels at their anchors ride.

XII

Some spread the flowing canvas, some attest
The strength and swiftness of the straining oar ;
And as they cleave the water's yielding breast,
Sparkles the foam in silver clouds before.
Then spake the damsel : ' Tho' ye now behold
Both land and sea filled with the impious race,
Not all his forces has the king enrolled ;
This does not all his mighty host embrace.

XIII

' Alone from Egypt and its confines he
Has mustered these ; those distant he attends,
Since the vast sway of his authority
Far to the east and glowing south extends ;
So that I trust we shall have homewards sped
Ere he has struck his tents, or left the coast,
He, or whatever captain in his stead
Appointed may be to command the host.'

XIV

While speaking thus, like scornful eagle, who
Passes 'mid other birds in fearless flight,
And, soaring upwards, is soon lost to view
In the full splendour of the sun's broad light ;
So 'mid the different ships her shallop flew,
Nor had the damsel the least care or dread
That they would either hinder or pursue.
Away, away, with unslacked speed she sped,

XV

And in a moment Raffia reached, the town
That first in Syria's kingdom doth appear
To those from Egypt coming ; then sailed down
The lonely coast of barren Rinocere.
Not distant far a mountain they espied
That towers in lordly grandeur o'er the main,
Whose base is washed by the unstable tide,
Whose bowels Pompey's famous bones contain.

XVI

Then Damietta they observe, and see
How the broad Nile her heaven-born tribute pays,
Thro' her seven famous channels, to the sea,
And thro' a hundred other lesser ways ;
Then pass that famous city which the Greek
Founded for Greek inhabitants of yore ;
Then on past Pharos, once an island bleak
Cut off from land, but which now joins the shore.

XVII

Far to the northward Rhodes she leaves, and Crete,
And coasting towards barbaric Afric stands,
Whose shores alone are tilled and wave with wheat ;
Within are monsters and unfruitful sands.
Then Marmorica and the coast she shaves,
Where once Cyrene's five proud cities stood ;
Here Tolomita, and, with its calm waves,
There view the source of fabled Lethe's flood.

XVIII

The greater Syrtes, the bold seaman's dread,
Landward, she shuns, and keeps well out to sea ;
And, doubling round Giudeca's beetling head,
Passes the Magra's mouth ; then Tripoli
They view upon the coast, but can't perceive
The spot where Malta's neighbouring lowlands lie ;
Then the other Syrtes and Alzerbe leave,
The dwelling once of the Lotophagi.

XIX

Her bay extending two high hills between,
Upon the moon-shaped sea-board, Tunis stands—
Tunis, the wealthy and the honoured queen
Of cities, noted throughout Lybia's lands ;
On the opposite side Sicilia sits, and rears
His brow great Lilybæum ; and here shows
The damsel the illustrious cavaliers
The historic site where once proud Carthage rose.

XX

Low lies proud Carthage ; scarcely does the shore
A trace retain of her wide ruins now.
Great cities die, realms sink to rise no more,
Rank weeds and sand deface their pomp ; yet thou
Wouldst seem to spurn mortality, vain man !
Thou mass of grasping selfishness and pride !
They reach Biserta then, and, farther on,
Sardinia leave upon the other side.

XXI

Then skirt those plains where nomad Arabs lead
A pastoral life ; Bugia pass, Algiers,
Vile nests of pirates ; when, still more ahead,
Oran, with its white minarets, appears ;
Then coast along wild Tingitana's shores,
The nurse of lion and of elephant ;
Now kingdom of Morocco and the Moors,
Then Fez, then over to Granada slant,

XXII

Reaching those straits thro' which Alcides' hand
Poured in the ocean, as old fables feign ;
It may be true 'twere once continuous land,
That some convulsion rudely rent in twain ;
The barrier burst, in rushed the sweeping main ;
Here Abyla thrusting, forcing Calpé there,
Thus Afric severing by a gulf from Spain :
Such are the changes to which Nature's heir.

XXIII

Four times in orient had appeared the sun
Since the weird vessel left the land, nor e'er
Had, since 'twere needless, into harbour run,
And so much had performed of her career,
When, having passed the entrance of the strait,
Fearless she plunged into the unbounded sea :
But if it here, where land-locked, is so great,
When it surrounds the land, what must it be ?

XXIV

Thro' the high billows, Cadiz now no more,
Nor its two neighbouring cities, they descry :
They quit entirely sight of land and shore ;
Sky bounds the ocean, ocean bounds the sky.
Then spake Ubald : ' O maiden, who hast led
Us to this pathless infinite expanse,
Say, has ship e'er been here, and if ahead,
In the world we seek, exist inhabitants ?'

XXV

And she : ' When Hercules, with powerful hand,
The monsters slew of Afric and of Spain,
And had passed over and subdued your land,
Yet durst not tempt the perils of the main ;
He fixed these Pillars, and within restrained,
In sphere too small, the ambition of mankind.
But great Ulysses his commands disdained :
No limits could his thirst for knowledge bind.

XXVI

' He boldly past those fabled columns sailed,
And seawards plied his oars' audacious sweep ;
But naught his knowledge of the sea availed ;
Engulphed he was by the voracious deep,
Where, with his body, still concealed, remains
His hapless fate, untold by mortal lips.
If others there were driven by hurricanes,
They turned not back, or perished with their ships.

XXVII

‘So that unknown is this vast sea’s expanse ;
A thousand isles and realms are here unknown ;
Nor is the land without inhabitants,
But teeming, rich, and fruitful as your own ;
Not barren can that powerful influence be
Which the sun sheds.’ Then, as away they whirled,
Resumed Ubaldo : ‘Ah, relate to me,
The laws and worship of that hidden world.’

XXVIII

‘As various as their races,’ she begun,
‘Their customs, rites, and language are ; nay, more,
Some worship beasts, and some the stars and sun ;
Some the great common mother Earth adore ;
Others there are that load their loathsome boards
With food at which the sickening thoughts rebel ;
Barbarous, in short, and atheist are the hordes,
That on the western side of Calpe dwell.’

XXIX

‘Has, then, that God,’ enquired the curious youth,
‘Whose advent to immortal light gave birth,
Willed to withhold all glimmer of the truth
From such a mighty portion of the earth ?’
‘No,’ answered she ; ‘nay, more, St. Peter’s faith
Will there with every civil art expand ;
Nor will this long and seeming endless path
Divide you always from that distant land.’

XXX

‘The day will come when to the sailor bold
Alcides’ marks will be a myth ; each sea,
Whose very name remains as yet untold,
And unknown realms, will then illustrious be ;
And the most chivalrous of all the ships
Will circumnavigate the sea-girt sphere,
Measure the earth’s dimensions, and eclipse
The sun in her victorious career.

XXXI

‘Foremost of all, a gallant Genoese
Will tempt that unknown, that untrodden course ;
No dubious clime, no inhospitable seas,
No tempest, with resounding menace hoarse,
No peril of most formidable kind,
No dread, no danger, howsoever great,
Will mew his noble and magnanimous mind
Within the limits of that narrow strait.

XXXII

‘Thou shalt, Columbus ! spread thy favoured sail
Towards a new world, which so far distant lies,
That Fame, almost to reach thy flight, will fail,
Or with her thousand wings or thousand eyes :
Let her chaunt Bacchus’ and Alcides’ praise ;
Thy name alone suffices for thy glory ;
Thy very memory, to all future days,
Will furnish theme of deathless song and story.’

XXXIII

Thus spake the maid, and thro' the watery way
Steered towards the west, and then to southward bore,
Seeing behind how rose the new-born day,
And how the sun in glory set before ;
But at the moment when her rays and dew
Around her beautiful Aurora spread,
They saw afar a hazy mountain lose
Amid o'erhanging clouds its lofty head ;

XXXIV

But when its form the mist no longer hides,
They see it its own real shape bespeak,
Resembling Egypt's pointed pyramids,
Large at the base, and tapering towards the peak ;
And such a smoking, fiery cone display,
As that 'neath which Enceladus doth lie,
Whose nature 'tis to vomit smoke by day,
And thro' the night illumine with flame the sky.

XXXV

Then other islands they behold, less great,
And other cliffs, less lofty and less steep ;
This is the group of isles called Fortunate
In olden times, and still that title keep ;
Whose friendly skies were counted so benign,
That there spontaneously the untilled earth
Was deemed to bear, and there the unpruned vine
To the most prized and luscious fruit gave birth.

XXXVI

The olive there ne'er blossoms to deceive,
There odorous honey trickles from the oak;
There, murmuring softly, rivulets receive
Their sparkling crystal from the living rock;
There to the dew of freshening zephyr yields
The summer's heat, which ne'er oppressive grows;
And placed are there the famed Elysian fields,
Where the glad spirits of the blest repose.

XXXVII

Making for these, the damsel said : ' Now ye
Approach your journey's end, O cavaliers ;
These are the isles of Fortune that you see,
Whose great, but doubtful fame has reached your ears ;
Most fertile, gay, and beautiful they are,
But false reports exaggerate what's true.'
While speaking this, their lovely escort near
To the first island of the decade drew.

XXXVIII

Then Charles : ' O lady, if the high emprise
That leads us here forbid not the demand,
Let us debark, and feast our longing eyes
Upon the marvels of this unknown land ;
The people see, their customs and their rites ;
All that to sage just cause of envy were,
If to the world recounting the strange sights,
I could exclaim, I saw them, I was there !'

XXXIX

She answered : ' The request is worthy thee,
O noble cavalier ; but what can I,
If Heaven's severe inviolable decree
Refuses with thy wishes to comply ?
Since the full period has not yet come round,
That God has for the great discovery planned,
Nor may ye carry from the vast profound
Authentic news to your benighted land.

XL

' To you 'tis given, by favour from the skies,
Far to transgress the sailor's common track ;
To arrive where bound the captive warrior lies,
And to the glowing orient lead him back ;
Let this suffice, for farther to aspire
Were to grow haughty, and wage war with fate.'
Ev'n as she spoke, the second isle seemed higher,
And the first in proportion to abate.

XLI

Then by the knights, she showing them, is seen
How eastward all in lengthened order rise,
And that the space of sea which breaks between
Each isle, is almost of an equal size.
In seven they huts and cultivation see,
With other signs that of man's presence tell ;
Three are a desert, where, secure and free,
Wild beasts in forest and in mountain dwell.

XLII

In one of these a lone spot they survey,
Where the shore forms a crescent, and extends
Two lengthened horns, between which a vast bay
It holds concealed ; a rock the port defends,
And, fronting landwards, with its back defies
And stems the waves that from the westward sweep ;
On either side two beetling headlands rise,
Landmarks for sailors o'er the pathless deep.

XLIII

Beneath, the ocean sleeps in peace profound,
Above, dark woods a gloomy landscape made,
Midway, a cavern lay with ivy crowned,
With waters pleasant, and inviting shade ;
Ne'er rope, nor anchor with tenacious fluke,
Ships binds nor bridles where such calm prevails.
The damsel entered that secluded nook,
And in a moment furled the flowing sails.

XLIV

Then said : ' Sir knights, that lofty pile which lies
Upon the summit of yon mount, survey ;
There, lost in sloth and sensualities,
Christ's champion whiles his worthless life away.
With the sun rising for your escort, ye
By that ascent must seek the enchanted bower ;
Nor such detention chide, since each would be,
Except the matin, an ill-omened hour.

XLV

‘ By daylight, which still gilds the mountain’s side,
Far as its base ye can with safety reach.’
At the dismissal of their noble guide,
They leaped with joy upon the wished-for beach,
And found the road, that led to it thus far,
So easy, that no need they felt of rest ;
And, at the foot arrived, saw Phœbus’ car
Rolling still distant from the ocean’s breast.

XLVI

By many a precipice and ruin they
Perceive they must to the high summit pass ;
And that with ice and snow is strewn the way,
While all beyond is flowers and emerald grass.
Near its white chin the hair all verdant grows,
And wintry frost preserves unsullied faith
With the fair lily and the delicate rose :
Such power enchantment over nature hath.

XLVII

In a wild spot, with matted shade o’errun,
At the hill’s foot the warriors passed the night ;
But with the earliest blushes of the sun,
Eternal fountain of God’s golden light,
‘ Up ! up ! ’ they both exclaimed, and recommenced
Their journey with a prompt determined will,
When a fierce dragon crossed their path, and fenced
(Horrid, diverse !) their passage to the hill.

XLVIII

His scaly crest, and head of squalid gold,
He lifts erect ; swoln is his neck with ire ;
His red eyes glare as he with fold on fold
Blocks up the path, and poison breathes, and fire ;
Into himself now coils and now distends
His knotty rings, and glides along to guard
The wonted post that on his care depends ;
Yet could he not the knights' advance retard.

XLIX

Already Charles had drawn his trusty brand
To assail the monster, when Ubaldo spake :
' What wouldst attempt? Deem'st thou that mortal hand,
Or arms like thine, can pierce the guardian snake ?'
Then shook the golden and immortal wand,
Whose hissing sound the brute perceiving, he,
Scared at the noise, fled swiftly o'er the sand,
Concealed himself, and left the passage free.

L

Still higher, to guard the pass, a lion stands,
That roars defiance, scowls, and stamps, and paws;
Bristling his mane, he opens and expands
The frightful cave of his voracious jaws ;
Lashing his sides, he grows inflamed with ire ;
And yet no sooner is the wand in sight,
Than secret terror chills the native fire
Of his proud heart ; he turns, and takes to flight.

LI

Their swift advance the undaunted pair pursue,
But find before them a dread phalanx rise
Of beasts of prey, of every form and hue,
Diverse in voice, in motion, and in size ;
All that most monstrous, most ferocious roam
'Twixt Atlas' confines and the Nile's far floods,
Seem here assembled with the brutes whose home
Is wild Ercynia and Hyrcania's woods.

LII

Yet was that savage army powerless quite
Or to resist or check the knights' advance ;
Nay, (novel miracle !) 'twas put to flight
By a slight whistle and a single glance.
The now victorious couple straightway gain
The mountain's crest without impediment,
Save where the ice-bound paths their steps detain,
And Alpine snows encumber the ascent.

LIII

But when they had passed the line of endless snow,
And overcome the steep and rugged ground,
Beneath a sky of temperate summer, lo !
On the hill-top a spacious plain they found.
Here ever blows refreshing, balmy air,
Nor ceases aye its changeless course to run ;
Nor is its gentle breath, as haps elsewhere,
Lulled or awakened by the circling sun.

LIV

Nor doth the clime, as elsewhere, alternate
Now ice, now fire, now weather foul, now fair ;
Nor too great heats or colds predominate,
But aye the heavens unclouded splendour wear,
Nursing to fields the grass, to grass the flowers,
Fragrance to flowers, perennial shade to trees :
Upon the lake a palace sits, and towers
In lordly loftiness o'er lands and seas.

LV

The cavaliers from that steep rough ascent
Felt somewhat tired, and lacked their wonted force ;
Whence thro' the enamelled paths they slowly went,
Now moving on, now halting in their course ;
When, lo ! a fountain, that their burning drought
Invited them to quench, before them lay ;
And from one large and many a lesser spout
The grass besprinkled with its diamond spray ;

LVI

Converging, then, the different streams unite
In a deep channel, 'twixt whose verdant sides,
Screened by perennial foliage from the light,
Gelid and brown, the brawling river glides ;
But so transparent, that the bottom shows
Whate'er of beautiful within it lies :
Knee-deep the grass along its margent grows,
Which a most fresh luxurious couch supplies.

LVII

‘Behold the fount of laughter, and the brook
Whose limpid drops such mortal risks contain.
Here,’ they exclaimed, ‘we must with caution look ;
Here all desire and appetite restrain ;
Here close our ears against the enchanting strains
Which the fair sirens of false pleasures wake.’
Thus on they went to where the stream attains
Still greater magnitude, and forms a lake,

LVIII

Upon whose edge a banquet was prepared,
Of the most rich and appetising food ;
And here two laughing wanton maids repaired,
To sport and frolic in the crystal flood ;
Now dashing water in each other’s face,
Now striving who first wins the goal ; below
At times they dive, and from their hidden race
At length their heads and dripping shoulders show.

LIX

The nude and lovely swimmers somewhat swayed
The hardened bosoms of the warrior knights ;
So much so, that to gaze at them they stayed,
While they kept up their gambols and delights.
Meanwhile, one, rising up, her snowy breast,
With all that most allures the eye, revealed,
From the waist upwards, to the heavens, undressed ;
Her other limbs the lake’s blue veil concealed.

LX

As from the waves peep forth the star of morn,
The dew distilling of its watery home ;
Or as the Queen of Love, when newly born,
Rose from the azure sea's prolific foam ;
So she appeared—ev'n so her golden hair
Distilled the crystalline transparent lymph.
Then looking round, she feigned to see the pair,
And shrank into herself—the modest nymph !

LXI

And the auburn locks that, in a single braid,
Enwreathed her forehead, instantly unrolled,
Whose long thick masses, falling down, arrayed
The tender ivory in a veil of gold.
The sight thus reft them, how surpassing fair !
Nor less the change their admiration claimed,
As, hidden by the water and her hair,
She towards them turned, half smiling, half ashamed.

LXII

The siren smiled, and thro' her dimples blushed,
And from her blushes lovelier was her smile,
And from her smiles the scarlet tints that flushed
Her delicate face were fairer, lovelier still ;
Then spoke with voice so tender and so sweet,
That all the world had yielded to her speech :
' O fortunate pilgrims ! whom this calm retreat
Indulgent fortune has vouchsafed to reach.

LXIII

‘ This is the haven of the world ; here rest
From all its cares, and taste that bliss untold
Which happy mortals formerly possessed,
Uncurbed, unfettered, in the Age of Gold.
Here ye in safety may your arms depose,
Till now required, and, in this halcyon grove,
Them consecrate henceforward to repose ;
Since here ye’ll be but paladins of Love.

LXIV

‘ The bed henceforth will be your field of fight,
And the enamell’d greensward’s yielding breast.
Now we will lead you to the royal sight
Of her who maketh all her servants blest ;
She will receive you in the lists of those
Destined to share her joys : but in this lake
Pray first the dust that covers you depose,
And from yon table some refreshment take.’

LXV

Thus spake the one, the other in accord,
With becks and smiles, accompanied her ; so
Musicians on the tuneful harpischord
The dance accompany, now swift, now slow.
But the two knights had souls of iron ; each
Was deaf to their false wiles and treacherous art ;
Their winning looks and captivating speech
Touched the frail flesh, but left untouched the heart.

LXVI

Ev'n if some seeds of their bewitching charms
Entered within, where germinates desire,
Soon reason came to root out with her arms
The nascent wish, and quench the rising fire.
One pair, thus baffled, stays ; one will not take
Leave of the wheedling sirens, but departs :
This to the palace goes, that in the lake
Plunges—repulse so mortified their hearts.



CANTO XVI.

I

ROUND is the rich and ornate edifice,
And in its central, innermost recess,
A far more fair and wondrous garden lies
Than dreams can picture or the tongue express ;
Round it weird workmen had contrived to raise
A straggling range of galleries, amid
The complex turns of whose fallacious maze
It rests, almost impenetrably hid.

II

Thro' the main entrance (the vast pile had more
Than hundred others) passed the warriors bold.
Of chiselled silver, each elaborate door
Creaked on bright hinges of refulgent gold.
They paused to scan the workmanship, and each
Found that the rich material it outvies ;
No sign of life here fails, save that of speech,
Nor had that failed, could they believe their eyes.

III

Here they amid Mæonian maidens viewed
How Hercules the passing hour beguiles ;
And if he ruled the stars, and hell subdued,
He twirls the spindle now : Love looks and smiles.
Here, with effeminate hand, Iolé bears,
In mocking mood, his homicidal arms,
And on her back his lion-mantle wears—
Too rough a burden for such dainty charms.

IV

A sea lies opposite, whose azure plain
Sparkles with foam from the white billow's splash,
And in the midst a double row is seen
Of ships and arms : the arms with lightning flash,
With gold the waters glow ; and 'twould appear
That ev'n Leucaté caught the battle's blaze :
Augustus there his Romans leads ; and here
His eastern army Antony arrays.

V

You'd say, unmoored, the nimble Cyclades
Plunged through the waves ; that rock encountered rock,
The force was such with which both those and these,
In towering vessels, met in mortal shock ;
Now darts and fire-balls fly, and now you see
The fatal waters with fresh carnage red ;
And, ere decided is the victory,
Lo ! panic struck, the barbarous queen has fled.

VI

Antonio flies, and may that hope foreclose
Of the world's empire to which he aspired :
He flies not, no, nor fears—no fear he knows ;
But follows her by fatal frenzy fired,
Fuming like one o'er whom, as thus he flies,
Remorse, combined with love and rage prevails,
And who, distraught, alternately descries
The doubtful combat and the flying sails.

VII

Then, sheltered in the coverts of the Nile,
He on her bosom seems for death to wait,
And in the bliss of her angelic smile
To find some solace for his bitter fate :
Varied and sculptured in such wondrous guise
Was the rich metal of the princely gate ;
From these fair objects turning, then, their eyes,
The knights the intricate building penetrate.

VIII

As the Mæander mounts and now descends
Its sinuous banks in mazy doubtful course,
Now up to its springs, now down to the ocean bends,
And meets itself returning to its source :
Such, and more puzzling, were those tortuous ways ;
But the book held the secret of the spot ;
The wizard's gift such perfect clue conveys,
That they unravelled and resolved the knot.

IX

But when they had passed those labyrinthine bowers,
In gay aspect the lovely garden opes :
Still water, springing crystal, myriad flowers,
All kinds of herbs and plants, rich sunny slopes,
Grottoes and groves, dark vales' inviting shade,
Were grouped together in one fairy scene ;
And what more beautiful the picture made,
Art, that did all, remained herself unseen.

X

So blent was waste with ornament, you'd deem
All strictly natural : the art of Nature
Was such, that she, in frolic mood, would seem
For sport to imitate her imitator.
The very air was formed by magic powers
That caused perennial spring : undying fruit
For ever bloomed amid undying flowers,
And one was ripe when the other 'gan to shoot.

XI

On the same stem, and 'twixt the self-same leaves,
One fig is ripe, while 'neath, another blows ;
To the same bough the golden apple cleaves,
As that on which its green successor grows ;
In rank luxuriance the meandering vine
Creep to the sunniest aspect you behold ;
Here flowering buds their tortuous tendrils twine ;
Here, big with nectar, rubies form and gold.

XII

Beautiful birds, among the frondous boughs,
Vie with each other in seductive spells ;
O'er wood and water gentle Zephyr blows,
And them to murmur as she strikes compels.
When cease the birds, loudly the air replies ;
When sing the birds, more soft its tones appear ;
Or chance or art the voices harmonise,
Or in alternate numbers charm the ear.

XIII

One bird there was, that 'mong the others flew,
Of variegated plume and purple beak,
Whose untied tongue such sounds articulate drew,
That like a man he almost seemed to speak ;
And with such art continued to prolong
His sweet discourse, he seemed a marvel rare.
The others paused to listen to his song,
And the wind hushed the whispers in the air.

XIV

'Ah, see,' he sang, 'the blushing maiden rose
Peep from her green, in modesty arrayed,
And still half open, still half shut, disclose
The greater loveliness, the less displayed.
Lo ! she, grown bolder, bares her bosom—Lo !
But scarce uncovered, her frail beauty fades,
Nor seems the same—the same no longer, so
Desired before by lovers and by maids.

XV

‘ So passeth in the passing of a day
Life’s bloom and verdure, nor, tho’ April’s showers
Return with promise of another May,
Will it reblossom, or again bear flowers.
Cull we, then, roses while life’s morning be
Pranked with that prime which time will soon remove;
Cull we Love’s rose, and let us love while we,
Still loving, meet with fond return of love.’

XVI

He ceased ; as if approving it, the choir
Of tuneful birds take up the impassioned strain ;
The doves kiss fondly, with renewed desire ;
Nor is there creature can from love refrain :
The vestal laurel, the hard-hearted oak,
And all the various members of the grove,
And earth and air, appear to assume the look,
And the sighs breathe, of universal love.

XVII

’Mid such attractive, such enchanting sights,
’Mid song so dulcet, so divine as this,
Unmoved and firm proceed the noble knights,
Steeled ’gainst the spell of such surpassing bliss !
When, where an opening the thick branches leave,
They cast their eyes, and see, or seem to see,
Yes, they the lover and the loved perceive—
He’s on her lap, on flowers reclining she.

XVIII

Her parted veil betrays her breast to view,
Her tresses wanton in the summer air ;
She languishes to charm ; a sheet of dew,
Her fair face blanching, renders it more fair ;
Like light in water, a lascivious smile
Shimmers in her moist eyes ; with witching grace
She o'er him bends. He in her lap the while
Pillows his head, and lifts to hers his face,

XIX

And, greedily depasturing his looks
On her dear charms, consumed, exhausted lies.
She, stooping down, now nectarous kisses sucks
From his lush lips, now tastes them in his eyes ;
But at that moment he so deeply sighed,
You'd think his very soul had passed away
To transmigrate in her. The knights aside
The lovers' amorous dalliance survey.

XX

A lucid crystal from the lover's waist
(Outlandish instrument) dependent lies ;
She rose, and in his hands unblushing placed
That chosen agent of love's mysteries.
He with inflamed, with laughing eyes the lass,
In different objects one alone descries :
She of the crystal makes her looking-glass,
And he his mirror of her lustrous eyes.

XXI

One boasts her empire, one his slavery—
She in herself, he in her loveliness.
'Ah, turn,' he whispers, 'darling, turn on me
Those eyes which, blessed with, have such power to bless !
For know, the fire that burns me, but reflects
Thy charms, and tells how beautiful thou art ;
Thy beauty, as portrayed in its effects,
Less shows the crystal than reveals my heart.

XXII

'Ah, would at least thou couldst behold how fair
Is thine own face, as thus thou slightest me ;
Since thy bright glance, dissatisfied elsewhere,
Can in itself alone contented be.
The clearest crystal but thy beauty mars ;
How can small glass a Paradise comprise ?
Heaven is thy worthy mirror, and the stars
Alone reflect the lustre of thine eyes.'

XXIII

Armida smiled at that, but ceases not
To snatch fresh charms from her coquettish toils :
She smooths her flowing hair, and, having got
Into fair shape its wanton errors, coils
It into ringlets, which with flowers she inweaves,
As with enamel gold ; with alien roses
The native lilies of her breast relieves,
And then, self-satisfied, her veil composes.

XXIV

The peacock ne'er such beauty spreads in show
In the full splendour of his Argus plumes ;
Not Iris such, when her dew-spangled bow
With gold and glowing purple she illumines.
But rich, beyond all measure, was her zone,
Relinquished never, even when undrest,
And made of immaterial things : alone
She to compose it the rare skill possessed.

XXV

The coy refusal, the voluptuous leer,
The feuds and truces, the heart-piercing eyes,
The tender kiss, the sympathetic tear,
The playful raillery, the broken sighs,
She fused together, welded into one,
Then tempered slowly o'er the furnace blast,
And with them formed the talismanic zone,
Whose mystic circle girt her lissome waist.

XXVI

At length, her toilette o'er, she asks his leave,
Embraces her dear lover, and departs,
Since during day she took a short reprieve,
Intent on business and her magic arts.
But he remains ; she ne'er permission grants
Him for a moment from that spot to stir ;
He can but wander 'mid the beasts and plants,
A hermit lover, but for being with her.

XXVII

But when the twilight's friendly silence calls
The impatient lovers to their stolen delight,
Beneath one roof, inside the garden walls,
They pass the blissful moments of the night ;
Now, when Armida, for severer rites,
Had left the garden and love's gentle charms,
From their umbrageous hiding-place the knights
Disclosed themselves, arrayed in pompous arms.

XXVIII

Like war horse, that, triumphant at the close
Of the campaign's fatigues and fame, repairs,
As wanton sire in infamous repose,
To roam at will 'mid pastures and the mares ;
If but awakened by the trumpet's strain
Or flashing steel, he neighs and gallops there ;
He burns to tread the martial lists again,
And in the charge once more his rider bear :

XXIX

So felt Rinaldo, as the lightning rays
Of armour burst upon his dazzled sight ;
Instant his warrior spirit was ablaze,
Excited, maddened by the welcome light,
Though morbid ease and pleasures had entranced
His facile mind. Meanwhile in full revealed,
Ubaldo from the underwood advanced,
And on him turned the adamantine shield.

XXX

In the bright shield the youth himself beheld,
Such as he was ; marked his effeminate air,
What perfume saw and wantonness exhaled,
His sybarite robes, his mantle, and his hair ;
The very sabre pendent at his side
Appeared a woman's gaudy ornament,
Forming a useless article of pride,
And not a manly warlike instrument.

XXXI

As one with deep and leaden sleep oppressed,
Comes, the dream past, unto himself again,
So turned he from the mirror's faithful test,
Nor longer could the sickening sight sustain ;
With drooping eyes he gazed upon the ground,
Timid, abashed ; a prey to burning shame,
'Neath the wild waves he wishes he were drowned,
Sunk in earth's centre, or consumed by flame.

XXXII

Then spake Ubaldo : ' Far from this lonely shore,
Europe and Asia bloody battle wage,
And those who thirst for fame, and Christ adore,
Now sheathed in arms in Palestine engage :
Thee, only thee, Bertholdo's son, removed
Outside the world, a little nook shuts in ;
By the world's movements thou art alone unmoved,
A Pagan trull's illustrious paladin !

XXXIII

‘ What sleep, what fatal lethargy unites,
Thy soul, thy valour to contaminate?
Up, up ! Thee, Godfred, thee the camp invites ;
Fortune and victory for thy coming wait ;
Come, fated champion ! and, ’neath Salem’s wall,
Complete the task begun, and let the horde
Which thou hast shaken so already, fall
Beneath the sweep of thy predestined sword.’

XXXIV

He ceased. The noble youth remained a space,
Voiceless, moveless, confused—but when the stings
Of shame to indignation had given place,
Armed indignation that from reason springs ;
And to his blushes flashed another fire,
That raged more fiercely, and more warmth bespoke ;
He rent asunder all his vain attire,
The wretched sign of his disgraceful yoke.

XXXV

And springing up with haste precipitate,
Through the wild mazes of the labyrinth fled ;
Meanwhile the guardian of her royal gate
Armida, horror-struck, saw lying dead :
She first suspected, but too soon had proof,
That ’twas her lover hurrying away ;
She saw him turn his back on that sweet roof,
(Ah, woeful spectacle !) then strove to say :

XXXVI

‘Whither, O cruel, leavest thou me alone?’

But grief had closed the passage to the sound,
So that returned the faint and dolorous tone,
Within her heart more sadly to rebound ;
Yes, power and knowledge greater than thine own,
Poor wretch, have robbed thee of thy heart’s delight ;
This she well knew, and vainly now had gone
To try could magic yet arrest his flight.

XXXVII

All the foul words Thessalian witches e’er
Breathed from their lips obscene, with every spell
That could arrest the planets in the air,
Or summon spirits from the abyss of hell ;
All, all she knew : and yet could not effect
That hell would ev’n make answer to her speech.
The sorceress then her incantations checked,
To try would beauty prove a better witch.

XXXVIII

She flies, nor recks of honour, or of state.
Where are her triumphs now, and vaunted power ?
She who Love’s empire, howsoever great,
Turned and o’erturned by a sole glance before ;
Whose pride was matched with such disdain, that she
Loved to be loved, and yet her lovers hated ;
Herself her idol, her delight to see
In others the impression she created.

XXXIX

Tho' slighted now, abandoned, and neglected,
She follows him who flies her, and who scorns ;
And her rare beauty, for itself rejected,
With tears, to make more beautiful, adorns.
Away she goes ; nor do her tender feet
Heed frost or Alpine roughness, and before
She sends loud cries, as heralds, to entreat ;
Nor reaches him till he had gained the shore.

XL

Then madly cries : ' O thou that bear'st with thee
Part of myself, and leavest part behind,
Or take thou this, or that restore to me,
Or both destroy ! Ah, stay ! ah, stay ! unkind !
Let my last dying accents reach thine ear ;
Kisses, a fairer will henceforth supply ;
Why to remain, unfeeling, dost thou fear ?
Thou canst refuse, who hadst the heart to fly.'

XLI

At this the cavalier stood still, while she
Came up all breathless and dissolved in tears ;
And tho' in greater grief she could not be,
Still not more sad than lovely she appears.
She looks—she looks him thro'—yet speaketh naught :
Or that she scorns, or thinks, or does not dare.
He durst not look ; and if a glance he caught,
'Twas with a furtive self-reproachful air.

XLII

As gentle singer, who before he dares
Free to loud burst of melody his tongue,
With a sweet prelude of low notes prepares
The listening world for his harmonious song :
So she, who, tho' in bitter grief immersed,
Had not forgotten her deceitful art,
Breathed a short symphony of sighs at first,
To predispose admission to his heart.

XLIII

'Think not, ah cruel!' she began, 'that I
To thee as lover should to lover pray.
Such we were once ; but shouldst thou scorn this tie,
Or that its memory on thy mind doth weigh,
Hear me at least as foe ; a foeman will
At times ev'n listen to a foe's desire :
Thou well mayst grant what I demand, and still
Preserve thy anger and thy hate entire.

XLIV

'If thou dost hate me, and in that delight,
Hate on ; I leave thee to that feeling free.
Thou deem'st it just, 'tis just ; since I admit
The Franks I hated—yes, I hated thee.
I, Pagan born, a thousand means employed
Thy realm to ruin, and with deep laid plot
Thee followed, captured, and from arms decoyed,
Far, far away, to a strange unknown spot.

XLV

‘ And add to this, what more thy hate will move,
And will the burden of my wrongs complete,
I cheated and enticed thee into love.

Most impious fraud, forsooth ! most base deceit,
To yield the flower of maidenhood and pride,
And make another master of these charms,
And that which unto thousands was denied,
To give unsought for to a stranger’s arms !

XLVI

‘ Count this too ’mong the sins I have to bear,
And let the faults of poor Armida move
Thee to depart from hence ; no more to care
For this sweet roof, mute witness of our love.
Go, battle, toil, haste back to Palestine ;
I’ll speed thee on : destroy our faith—Ah me !
Why say I ours ? Alas ! no longer mine ;
Since, cruel idol, I but worship thee.

XLVII

‘ Let me but follow thee, and quit this soil ;
Ev’n foes would reckon that a small request.
The spoiler leaves not thus behind his spoil ;
The conqueror goes, why then should captive rest ?
Me let the camp among thy trophies see,
And add this triumph to thy former fame,
That thou hast mocked the woman that mocked thee,
So that they point their fingers at my shame.

XLVIII

‘ Shamed and despised, for whom, then, shall I save
These flowing tresses thou hast rendered vile ?
I’ll cut them off, and follow thee as slave,
And to that grade my bearing reconcile.
Thee will I follow through the hostile crowd,
Where hottest battle doth its risks enhance ;
With strength sufficient is my arm endowed
To lead thy charger, or support thy lance.

XLIX

‘ Yes, I will be or I will bear thy shield,
Nor spare myself, so thou uninjured be ;
Thro’ this bare bosom, on the bloody field,
Shall pass the sword, before it reaches thee.
Barbarian sure were not inhuman so
As point ’gainst thee, thro’ this my breast, his arms ;
And may the pleasure of revenge forego
For these, whate’er they be, neglected charms.

L

‘ Fool ! do I still presume, still vaunt the worth
Of slighted beauty, that can nought obtain ?’
More she had said, but scalding tears burst forth,
Like torrent sweeping down an Alpine chain.
To seize his hand, his cloak, she had begun,
Kneeling in suppliant posture on the ground :
But he drew back, resisted her, and won ;
No entrance love, his tears no exit found.

LI

Love entered not to fan the former flame
That in his bosom reason had congealed,
But in its stead, at least, compassion came—
Love's chaste companion—whose mute voice appealed,
And touched him, so that it was all he could
Refrain from tears ; yet, by strong will, he reined
His yearning bias to that tender mood,
And, by an effort, calm indifference feigned,

LII

Then said : ' Armida, grieved enough I am,
And fain would, an I could, remove from thee
The burning spirit of thy ill-starred flame,
Since I from anger and from hate am free,
Nor wrongs remember, nor revenge pursue ;
Nor can I thee as slave or foe address :
Thou hast erred and passed beyond all bounds, 'tis true,
Carrying thy love and hatred to excess.

LIII

' But then, such errors common are, and them
Thy native laws, thy sex, thy youth excuse.
I, too, have erred, nor can I thee condemn,
Unless I indulgence to myself refuse :
In weal, in woe, in life, aye, ev'n in death
Thy memory will be honoured and most dear ;
And, so far as my honour and my faith
Allow of it, I'll be thy cavalier.

LIV

‘ But let us now our shame and sin give o’er ;
Such is, Armida, my last prayer to thee,
And on this distant solitary shore
For ever buried let their memory be ;
Of all my deeds be this alone forgot,
Nor in the world exist of it one trace ;
And, ah, permit no ignominious blot
Thy beauty, worth, and lineage to disgrace.

LV

‘ Remain in peace ; I go, but thou must stay—
My guide forbids thy flight with me ; remain,
Or seek some other, better, happier way,
And, as thou art wise, these mad resolves restrain.’
No longer could the infuriate fair disguise
Her growing wrath, as thus Rinaldo spoke ;
Awhile she scanned him with despiteful eyes,
Then into these malign reproaches broke :

LVI

‘ Thee fair Sofia ne’er produced, not thus
Dost thou the blood of Azzo’s stock attest :
Thy parents were the icy Caucasus
And wild sea-waves ; thy nurse some tigress’ breast.
Why more dissemble to a man that shows
Not ev’n a vestige of humanity ?
Has he changed colour, or for my deep woes
One tear-drop shed, or breathed a single sigh ?

LVII

‘ What things shall I pass over or repeat ?
He says he’s mine, yet from my presence goes ;
Compassionate, generous victor, to forget
And ev’n forgive the offences of his foes !
Hear how this chaste, this argumentative
Zenocrates his theory of love refines !
Ye Gods ! O Heaven ! what—let these sinners live,
Yet hurl destruction ’gainst your sacred shrines.

LVIII

‘ But go, hard-hearted monster ! with that peace
Thou leav’st to me ; unjust, relentless, go !
But never shall my naked spirit cease
To haunt thy presence, and torment thee—no !
New Fury, I with serpents and with fire
Will torture thee, as I have loved before ;
And, shouldst thou ’scape the raging billows’ ire,
And safely reach the battle-field once more,

LIX

‘ There, ’mid the dead and dying prostrate, all
My pangs thou shalt repay, false cavalier ;
And by her name Armida often call
At thy last gasp—this, this I hope to hear.’
But now the exhausted sufferer sank, nor could
Complete the words that in her passion rose :
She falls, half-lifeless, her dank pores exude
An icy sweat, her heavy eyelids close.

LX

Closed are thine eyes, Armida ; aught to cheer
Thy parting pangs invidious Heaven denies.
Ah, wretched, ope them, and behold the tear,
The bitter tear that blinds Rinaldo's eyes.
Couldst thou but hear the music of his sighs,
How it would soothe thee, and thy anguish quell ;
All that he can he gives, in piteous guise
Then takes (yet seest thou not !) a last farewell.

LXI

What should he do ? Upon the barren sands
Desert her thus, half living and half dead ?
His stay compassion, courtesy demands ;
But hard necessity compels—He fled.
Away, away, the gentle westering gales
Thro' the fair tresses of his escort blew ;
O'er the deep ocean fly the golden sails ;
The coast he watches till it sinks from view.

LXII

But when restored Armida gazed around,
Nought but the silent desert met her eye.
'And is he gone ?' she cried ; 'upon the ground
Could he forsake me thus, perhaps to die ?
Could not the traitor, in need's extreme hour,
Have stayed one moment, some assistance lent ?
And do I love him still, false, fickle Giaour !
And unrevenged sit here and still lament ?

LXIII

‘ But wherefore weep? have I not other arts
And other means? The wretch I will pursue.
Not hell’s abyss, not heaven’s most secret parts,
Shall screen the unpitying monster from his due.
I seize him now, his heart to atoms tear,
His limbs hang up, dire warning to convey :
I would surpass his cruelty. But where,
But where am I? What is it, alas! I say?

LXIV

‘ Thou shouldst, Armide, have wreaked thy cruelty
Upon that cruel who deserved this fate,
When him thou heldest in captivity ;
But now thy new-born anger comes too late.
Still, if my charms, my wit, can something do,
My settled purpose shall not be in vain.
Ah, slighted beauty! it becomes thy due,
Since thine the wrong, full vengeance to obtain.

LXV

‘ This, then, my beauty the reward shall be
Of him who cleaves his execrable head ;
My gallant lovers, I demand that ye
Perform a daring, but a glorious deed ;
I, who of ample riches am the heir,
In guerdon of revenge, will give my heart,
And if unworthy such a price to bear,
Beauty! a vain and worthless gift thou art.

LXVI

‘ Ill-omened gift, I thee repudiate ;
I loathe my birth, and that I still survive ;
To be the mockery of a queen, I hate ;
Alone in hope of sweet revenge I live.’
In broken words thus stormed the excited fair,
Then turned her steps from the deserted place,
Showing her frantic fury and despair
In her wild eyes, loose locks, and burning face.

LXVII

Her palace reached, with dreadful voice she hailed
Three hundred Stygian imps. At once begun
The heavens to cloud, and in a moment paled
The aspect of the great eternal sun ;
A furious whirlwind struck the mountain chains,
Beneath her feet out-bellowed rampant hell,
While echoed thro’ the extent of her domains,
Howls, hisses, barks, in one unpitying yell.

LXVIII

Shades blacker far than night, in which no ray
Of light is mixed, the entire domain surround,
Except where fitfully fierce lightnings play,
And make the gloom by contrast more profound.
At length the darkness ceases, the sun’s face
Peeps forth, though not yet sunny is the air,
Nor of her palace is perceived a trace,
Nor mortal could affirm it once stood there.

LXIX

As clouds at times in the pure welkin form
The fleeting image of some mighty mass,
Which the sun melteth, or dispels the storm ;
Or like a sick man's dreams that swiftly pass ;
So disappeared her palace, and remained
Alone the Alps, and gloom before the eye ;
Her car, which stood prepared, she quickly gained,
And, as her wont, soared upwards to the sky.

LXX

Begirt by storms and wind's sonorous roll,
She treads the clouds and cleaves the air's expanse,
Passes the regions of the other pole,
And kingdoms of unknown inhabitants ;
Passes Alcides' bounds, yet will not she
Approach the land of Spaniard or of Moor,
But keeps her course suspended o'er the sea,
Until she reaches Syria's well-known shore.

LXXI

Nor to Damascus goes ; she shuns the sight
Of her own country, once so loved, so dear ;
Her car directing to the barren site,
Where 'mid the waves her castle towers appear.
Arrived, a place of solitude she sought,
And from her presence banished maid and page ;
Then wandered, lost in many an anxious thought ;
But shame soon yielded to o'ermastering rage.

LXXII

‘Yes, I will go, ere Egypt’s king,’ she cried,
‘Can to the rescue bring his eastern arms ;
I’ll try again those arts which erst I tried,
And to unwonted forms transform my charms :
Slave of the noblest I’ll become again,
And them with bane of rivalry infect ;
So that I vengeance ev’n in part obtain,
I care for neither honour nor respect.

LXXIII

‘Nor let my guardian uncle me accuse,
But blame himself who made me play this part,
Who first directed to unworthy views
My feeble sex, but bold and manly heart ;
’Twas he that made a vagrant dame of me,
And did my shame unloose, my courage fire ;
He is the cause of each indignity
I’ve done from love, and yet will do from ire.’

LXXIV

She thus resolves, and summons in all haste
Her pages, serjeants, waiting-maids, and squires ;
Seen is her princely fortune and fine taste
In their rich trappings and superb attires.
Away she starts, nor is there one that droops,
Or day or night the least repose obtains,
Until she reaches where the friendly troops
Their ranks extend o’er Gaza’s sunny plains.



CANTO XVII.

I

UPON the road that to Pelusium leads,
On Judah's skirts, the town of Gaza stands,
Close to the margin of the sea, where spreads
A boundless desert of unfruitful sands ;
Which, as the south wind does the rolling wave,
The simoom scattereth ; when this obtains,
Scarce can himself the passing pilgrim save,
Or refuge find from the unstable plains.

II

Of Egypt's king the frontier town it is ;
Long since he won it from the Turkish states,
But since convenient for the high emprise,
On which unchangeably he meditates,
He, leaving Memphis, his imperial seat,
His court translated to this distant coast,
Ordering, from various provinces, to meet
For muster an innumerable host.

III

O muse ! inspire my memory to declare
What force that mighty emperor did bring,
What season 'twas, what state of things was there,
What friends, what vassals followed Egypt's king,
When, from the south and distant Orient, he
Monarchs led on, and troops in countless swarms :
Thou canst alone the list detail to me,
Of chiefs, and troops, and half a world in arms.

IV

When Egypt had her ancient faith forsworn,
Rebelled, and did from Grecian rule retreat,
A warrior rose, of Mahomet's lineage born,
Became its master, and there fixed his seat ;
Caliph was called, and by that ancient style
Are his successors known ; and in this wise,
Through countless generations, hath the Nile
Beheld her Pharaohs and her Ptolemies.

V

So 'stablished grew the realm as years rolled o'er,
And had increased so, that it now engrossed
Afric and Asia to the Syrian shore,
From Barca's confines and Cyrene's coast ;
Above Syene far its bounds expand,
Where flows the Nile's interminable tide,
Thence to the unpeopled wilderness of sand,
And to the Euphrates on the other side.

VI

To right and left its compass comprehends
The odorous marsh and teeming sea, and on
Long past the Erythræan it extends
In the direction of the rising sun.
Great is the empire in itself ; its worth
Its present prince enhances, whose desert
Is even greater than his royal birth ;
In state-craft politic, in war expert.

VII

Oft 'gainst the Persian, 'gainst the Turk fought he ;
Attacked and routed them, and gained great fame.
Now lost, now won ; and in adversity
Proved greater still than when he overcame.
But when old age permitted him to bear
The weight of arms no more, he laid them down ;
Yet could not from his warlike bent forbear,
Nor from his lust of empire and renown.

VIII

He still conducts campaigns by deputy ;
And so robust in intellect appears,
That the great fabric of the monarchy
Seems no excessive burden for his years.
Thro' each small province Afric is afraid,
Her homage even Ind doth not withhold ;
Some send him troops, a voluntary aid ;
Others pay tribute to their liege in gold.

IX

Such is the king that now collects his ranks ;
Nay, urges those already gathered there
Against the rising fortune of the Franks,
Whose recent victories so mistrusted were.
Last came Armida ; at the very hour
Fixed for the muster she arrived at last.
On a great plain, beyond the walls, the power
Of Asia marshalled, before him march past.

X

Proudly he sits upon his throne on high,
To which a hundred steps of ivory led,
And, underneath a silver canopy,
His feet on gold-embroidered purple tread.
Rich with barbaric splendour you behold
His golden robes to glisten ; linen fair,
Twisted around in many a tortuous fold,
A diadem forms, new fashioned, for his hair.

XI

His right hand holds the sceptre ; he appears
Sedate and reverend, from his beard of snow ;
And his bright eyes, undimmed, unchanged by years,
With all youth's fire and resolution glow ;
Nor failed his every attitude to prove
The majesty of age and of command.
Apelles thus, or Phidias, had formed Jove,
But Jove when thundering with imperial hand.

XII

On either side of him a satrap stands,
Of whom the worthiest bears the naked steel,
Stern minister of justice ; in his hands
The other holds his office-badge, the seal.
One, secretary, for the king transacts
All civil business in affairs of state ;
Prince is the other of his troops, and acts
With powers most ample as chief magistrate.

XIII

Below, his own Circassian lancers formed
A bristling circle round his throne ; besides
Lances, they were with steel cuirasses armed,
And scimetars hung jangling at their sides.
Thus sat the king ; thus from his lofty seat
Reviewed the troops assembled in such swarms,
Who, as they marched past, lowered to his feet,
As to a god, their colours and their arms.

XIV

Heading the column, the Egyptians show
Their gallant ranks ; with them four chiefs defile,
Two from the upper part, two from the low,
Gift and creation of the heavenly Nile,
Whose fertile slime, usurping the sea strand,
Consolidated grew, and pregnant bore.
Thus Egypt waxed : how much is now inland
That was the coast, exposed to ships before.

XV

In the first squadron comes the swarthy host
That dwells on Alexandria's fertile plain,
That dwells upon the westward fronting coast,
Which there commences to be African.
Their chief Araspes is, more famous far
For subtile head-piece, than for strength of arm ;
Master of all the Moorish arts of war,
The secret ambuscade, the false alarm.

XVI

Then follow those that, towards the Orient placed,
Inhabit Asia's shores ; this troop was led
By Aronteo, whom no virtues graced,
But accident of birth illustrious made.
Ne'er sweated had 'neath helm this carpet knight,
Nor ever heard the morning bugle's blast,
When from a life of idlesse to the fight
Untimely ambition summoned him at last.

XVII

That which is third doth not a squadron seem,
But a vast army filling land and coast,
For whom not Egypt's harvests you would deem
Sufficient ; yet from one town comes this host,
A town that equals provinces in size,
And in itself a thousand guilds contains—
I speak of Cairo, which this mob supplies :
O'er them averse to arms, Campsoné reigns.

XVIII

Under Gazel come marshalled those that reap
Rich harvests in the adjacent fertile tract,
And up to where falls down, with giant leap,
The river at the second cataract.
The Egyptian rabble have but swords and bows,
Nor could sustain cuirass or helmet ; they
So richly clothed are, that they cause their foes
Less dread of danger than desire for prey.

XIX

Under Alarcon, Barca's people passed,
That almost naked and unarmed campaigned ;
Who upon plunder in its deserts vast,
From times remote, half-famished lives sustained.
With hordes less barbarous, but still unfit
For regular war, succeeds Zumara's king,
Then Tripoli's lord ; both skilled in running fight,
In raids irregular, and skirmishing.

XX

Behind their ranks the yeomen are enrolled
Of Stony and of Happy Araby,
Who never feel excess of heat or cold,
If with the voice of fame the facts agree.
There incense breathes, and other odours ; there
The immortal Phoenix doth new life assume,
And finds, 'mid flowers for ever fresh and fair,
At birth a cradle, and at death a tomb.

XXI

Less rich and ornamented is their dress,
But armed they're like Egyptians. Then advance
Other Arabians, who no homes possess
Of fixed abodes, not fixed inhabitants,
Perpetual pilgrims, that in constant flight
Drag migratory towns from place to place ;
These women's voices have, and women's height,
Long jetty locks, and copper-coloured face.

XXII

Long Indian javelins, tipped with steel, they bear,
And move so fleetly, that each bounding steed,
You'd say, was borne by whirlwind thro' the air,
If whirlwind e'er possessed such wondrous speed.
By Syphax was the foremost squadron led,
The second by Aldino ; in the rear
Follows the third, Albiazar at its head—
A murderous bandit, not a cavalier.

XXIII

Then pass the legions from those isles, around
Whose shores the water of Arabia curls,
Within whose teeming depths are often found
Rich fecund shells impregnated with precious pearls ;
Their straggling ranks the numerous Negroes close,
On the left coast of the Erythræan born :
These Agricalte leads ; Osmida those,
Who holds all faith and every law in scorn.

XXIV

Then pass the Ethiops that Meroë sends,
An island formed by Astabora here,
There by the mighty Nile ; it comprehends
Three realms and two religions in its sphere :
These Assimiro and Canario led ;
Both kings and followers of the Prophet, they
Acknowledge Egypt's Caliph as their head :
The third a Christian is, and stays away.

XXV

Then come two other vassal kings, whose bands
Are armed with bow and arrow for the war :
Soldan of Ormus one, whose fertile lands
By the great Persian Gulf surrounded are.
From Boëcan one, which, when the currents flow,
Becomes an island too, but whensoe'er
The tide recedes, the water falls so low,
That with dry foot the pilgrim passes there.

XXVI

Thee, Altamoro, in her virtuous bed,
Thy wife could not detain ; tho', in despair
To stop thy fatal going, tears she shed,
And beat her breast, and tore her golden hair :
' Has, then, the ocean's frightful face more charms
Than the fond pleading of my loving gaze?
More pleasing burden, cruel, are thy arms,
Than our dear child, when in thy lap he plays ?'

XXVII

He is the King of Samarcand, his crown
Is of his merits that of least esteem ;
Such skill in arms he unites to such renown
For courage frank, and gallantry extreme.
His arm, I prophesy, the Franks will feel ;
Nay, have good reason ev'n to fear it now.
His troops cuirasses wear of polished steel,
Swords at their sides, and mace at saddle-bow.

XXVIII

Lo! from far India and the East repairs
Fierce Prince Adrastus to the battle's din ;
He on his breast, by way of corselet, wears,
Speckled with green and black, a dragon's skin ;
Upon a monstrous elephant he rides,
As 'twere a simple steed ; his forces he
From this side of the rapid Ganges guides,
Where the swoln Indus breaks upon the sea.

XXIX

The troop succeeding in its ranks contained
The flower of all the imperial army ; they
To serve in peace and war-time were retained
By fitting honours and most liberal pay.
Armed both for safety and their foes' affright,
They on strong well-broke steeds prance proudly by,
And with their purple mantles, and the light
Of gold and steel, illuminate the sky.

XXX

'Mong them Alarco is, and Odemar,
Idraort, and Rimedon, who hath
Great reputation from bold feats in war,
Scorner alike of mortals and of death.
Rapoldo, the sea-king, and corsair famed ;
Tigranes, and Ormond, the powerful hight,
And Marlabusto the Arabian, named
So from the Arabs he subdued in fight.

XXXI

There Pirga, Arimon, Orindo were ;
Brimarté, conqueror of towns ; Siphant,
Tamer of horse ; and thou, beyond compare,
First in the wrestler's art, Aridamant ;
And Tisaphernes, thunderbolt of Mars,
Whom none can vaunt to match as cavalier,
Whether on horseback or on foot he wars,
The broadsword whirls or hurls the massy spear.

XXXII

Them an Armenian leads, who left the truth
Of Jesus' word, and turned Mahometan,
Ev'n in the prime and vigour of his youth ;
His name Clementè erst, now Emiren.
Still true he was to Egypt's king, and dear
Beyond all other princes of the land ;
Uniting worth of chief and cavalier,
In heart, in judgment, and in strength of hand.

XXXIII

No more remained, when, like a shooting star,
Armida suddenly her train displayed.
She sat sublime upon a gorgeous car,
And as a quivered archer was arrayed.
Her lovely face with recent anger gleamed,
Which with its fire her natural sweetness armed ;
Relentless, and in bitter mood, she seemed
To threaten all, and still, while threatening, charmed.

XXXIV

Her car with jacinths and carbuncles shone,
And vied in splendour with the glorious Morn's ;
A charioteer, the golden yoke upon,
Drove, bound in pairs, four docile unicorns.
A hundred girls and pages round her course,
Whose tender shoulders polished quivers bear ;
Each mounted is upon a milk-white horse,
Well broke, and bitted, and as swift as air.

XXXV

Then came her troops, by Aradino led,
And raised by Idraot in Palestine.
As when reborn the bird unique doth spread
His wings to visit lands beneath the line,
His variegated plumage, necklace rare,
And golden coronet, the world astound ;
While flocks of birds, his escort thro' the air,
In wonder lost, on all sides hover round :

XXXVI

So passed Armida, seeming, as she drove,
In look, attire, and port, a marvel rare ;
Nor was there one such stubborn soul of love,
But straight became enamoured of the fair.
If, when scarce seen, and in such sullen mood,
She could so great and various hosts beguile,
What were the spell, when she, all sunshine, wooed
With her seductive eyes and witching smile ?

XXXVII

When she had passed, the king of kings commands
That they the gallant Emireno call ;
Preferred to the other captains of his bands,
He meant to make him captain over all ;
Divining his intent, with look of pride,
That told how due the honour, he attends :
Straight the Circassian guard their ranks divide,
And make a path, while he the throne ascends.

XXXVIII

With head in reverence bowed, and bended knee,
Upon his heart he laid his loyal hand,
When thus the king : ‘ O Emiren, to thee
I entrust this sceptre and the chief command ;
Hurl on the Franks my vengeful wrath, and rive
The galling chains of the beleaguered king ;
Go, see, and conquer ; leave no soul alive,
Or should one ’scape, him back a prisoner bring.’

XXXIX

The knight then took the symbol of command,
Soon as the tyrant ceased, and thus replied :
‘ I take the sceptre from thy unconquered hand,
And to the emprise proceed, thy star my guide ;
And, as thy captain, hope, in right of thee,
Asia’s deep wrongs to vindicate. Thy face
I ne’er, except as conqueror, will see ;
Failure may bring me death, but not disgrace.

XL

‘ And Heaven I pray, should its indignant arm
Misfortune menace, which I don’t believe,
That on my head alone the fatal storm
May spend its fury, but uninjured leave
The gallant host, and that their chief be borne
Back in triumphal, more than funeral pride.’
He ceased, the clang of many a barbarous horn
To the camp’s hearty wild huzzas replied.

XLI

Girt by his staff, amid their ringing cheers,
The mighty monarch hastened to depart ;
And, reached his tent, assembled his chief peers
To a gay banquet—but he sat apart,
Dispensing viands now, now words of grace,
He honoured all. There fair Armida found
For her designs a most convenient place,
While ’mong them mirth and revelry flew round.

XLII

Soon as the tables cleared, the artful fair
Perceived all eyes were fixed on her alone,
And was by many well-known signs aware
How deep her poison on their minds was sown.
She rose, and turning round in attitude
That of respect and stateliness partook,
Tried to appear as fully as she could
Fierce and magnanimous in voice and look :

XLIII

‘ I, too, have come,’ she said, ‘ O king supreme,
Aid for our faith and country to afford ;
Woman I am, but royal, nor can deem
It wrong that I, a queen, unsheathe the sword :
Who reigns should practise every royal art,
And the same hand both arms and sceptre wield.
Mine shall strike home, aye, to the very heart,
And strow with foeman’s blood the battle-field.

XLIV

‘ Nor think that this is the first day my zeal
Has urged me forward in this noble cause,
For I before have battled for thy weal,
And in support of Mahmoud’s sacred laws ;
Thou shouldst remember if I speak the truth,
Who hast some knowledge of each gain, each loss ;
Thou know’st what numbers of its bravest youth
I captured prisoners from the purple Cross.

XLV

‘ By me they were both taken and secured,
And unto thee as splendid trophies sent ;
And still in thy dark dungeons had endured
From thee perpetual imprisonment,
And thou hadst been a thousand times more sure
To have crowned thy great dispute with victory,
Did not Rinaldo fatal means procure
To slay my escort, and to set them free.

XLVI

‘ Who this Rinaldo is, is widely known,
Ev’n here has reached some mention of his name ;
He is that cruel, who on me has thrown
Such deep affronts, uncanceled yet their shame ;
Hence wrath to reason adds its rankling sting,
And makes me burn his insults to avenge :
But what they are, some day you will know, O king ;
Enough at present, that I want revenge.

XLVII

‘ And I will have it ; since not all in vain
The winds are wont to carry every dart,
Nor does at times Heaven’s equal hand disdain
To guide just arms against offender’s heart ;
But if there be who from that wretch will rive
His odious head, and it present to me,
That mode of vengeance will some pleasure give,
Tho’ if I wrought it, ’twould more noble be.

XLVIII

Some pleasure—yes ; from him I'll not withhold
The greatest recompense within my power ;
I, richly endowed by Nature and with gold,
Will give him, if required, myself and dower ;
Thus with an oath this pledge I solemnise,
My promise thus inviolable make :
Now, if there be those that esteem our prize
Worthy the risk, let them stand forth and speak.'

XLIX

As thus Armida spoke, his greedy eyes
Love-struck Adrastus riveted on her :
'Nay, Heaven forbid thou shouldst discharge,' he cries,
'One shaft against that barbarous murderer ;
A villain heart like his, O archer fair,
Were quite unworthy of thy touch : instead,
I will the arrows of thy anger bear,
And thee present with his accursed head.'

L

'I'll tear his heart out, and his limbs divide,
As food for ravenous vultures to devour.'
Thus the Indian potentate, Adrastus, cried ;
But Tisapherne his vaunts could not endure.
'And who art thou,' said he, 'that show'st such brass,
In thy king's presence and thy peers among ;
Here's one, maybe, that would thy boasts surpass
By valiant actions, and yet holds his tongue.'

LI

The fiery Indian answered : ' I am one
Whose deeds were never by his words surpassed,
And hadst thou spoken elsewhere, as thou hast done
Before me here, such words had been thy last.'
They had continued ; but the king supreme,
His hand extending, bade the rivals part ;
Then to Armida said : ' Illustrious dame,
Thou hast, indeed, a manly generous heart.

LII

' And worthy art, that they to thee transfer
The scorn and passions which their bosoms fill,
That 'gainst this strong enfeebled plunderer
Thou mayst hereafter launch them at thy will ;
There they were best employed, their courage there
In friendly rivalry were best displayed.'
This said, he ceased ; again the jealous pair
To avenge their idol's cause fresh offers made.

LIII

Not only these, but all most famous there,
Offer with ready tongue their blood to shed ;
All volunteer, all bloody vengeance swear
Against Rinaldo's execrable head.
Such arms she moved, such anger roused meanwhile,
'Gainst the bold warrior once esteemed so dear :
But he, as soon as he had left the isle,
Began his homeward prosperous course to steer.

LIV

The shallop, favoured by the western gales
Returning, did its former course pursue,
And the fair breeze, that winged the bellying sails,
To waft it back no less propitious blew.
The youth now saw the Pole and either Bear,
And now the stars that, as bright Pharos, keep
Illumed the path of Night ; here streams, and there
Hills, whose rough peaks rise beetling o'er the deep.

LV

News of the camp now, now the usages
Of various realms he asks ; and they had gone
So far already through the briny seas,
That the fourth morning from the Orient shone ;
But when the sun's declining rays had fled,
The enchanted vessel reached the Syrian shore.
'Behold fair Palestine,' the lady said ;
'Your journey's ended, and my task is o'er.'

LVI

The three knights then upon the beach she placed,
And, ere a word could uttered be, had gone ;
Meanwhile dark night the lingering twilight chased,
And blent the varied colours into one.
They could not in those sandy deserts scan
Or circling wall or sheltering abode ;
No trace appeared of either horse or man,
Or any sign to indicate the road.

LVII

But when perplexed they had some moments been,
Their shoulders to the sounding sea they turned,
When going, lo ! before their eyes was seen
Something that with unusual lustre burned,
And lit with gold and silver rays the night,
Making the shadows rarer ; whereupon
Their footsteps they directed towards the light,
And see already what it is that shone.

LVIII

On a huge trunk arms newly made they spy,
Suspended opposite the moon's clear rays,
And, brighter far than planets in the sky,
Gems in the gilded casque and breastplate blaze ;
In the great shield they see, by Dian lit,
Fair figures stretching in extended rows :
Near, as if guardian, did an old man sit,
Who, when he saw, to meet them straightway rose.

LIX

Well, by two of the noble knights, the face
Of their sage venerable friend is known,
Who, when he had received their warm embrace,
And had to them a courteous greeting shown,
Turned to the youth, who mute and silently
Returned his gaze, and said to him : ' For none,
Save thee, O prince, at such an hour have I
Thus waited here, impatient and alone.

LX

‘ I, tho’ thou know’st not, am thy friend, and how
I watch thy interests but enquire of these,
Who, led by me, o’ercame the spells, where thou
Thy life wast wasting in ignoble ease.
Now mark my words—unlike the siren’s song,
May they not thee offend, O noble youth,
But may thy heart preserve them till a tongue
More wise and holy guide thee to the Truth.

LXI

‘ Not among nymphs and sirens, founts and flowers,
Not on voluptuous herbage in the shade,
But on the toilsome steep, where Virtue towers,
Alone, O prince, our supreme good is laid ;
Who from the paths of pleasure will not raise
His thoughts, nor freeze nor sweat, arrives not there ;
And wilt thou, lordly eagle, turn thy gaze
From that high goal, and to the vales repair.

LXII

‘ Nature thy brow directed toward the skies,
And gave thee instincts generous and sublime,
To look aloft, and to that glorious prize,
By virtuous deeds and brilliant actions, climb.
She gave thee, too, a swift and ready ire,
But not to use it in each civil broil ;
Not that it should thy vaulting fancy fire,
And, foe to reason, ’gainst thyself recoil ;

LXIII

‘ But that thy valour, armed by it, should smite
With greater force external adversaries,
And that repressed should be with greater might
Thy passions—foul, internal enemies.
Let the sage chief, then, govern and employ
It in the use for which it was ordained,
And at his will its too great strength alloy ;
By him be it now quickened—now restrained.’

LXIV

He ceased. The other, in attentive mood,
Treasured those maxims of advice profound ;
Meek as a child, abashed, ashamed he stood,
His modest eyelids fixed upon the ground.
Well did his secret thoughts the sage surmise,
And to him said : ‘ Raise up thy brow, my son ;
Upon this sculptured shield affix thine eyes,
And view the deeds thy ancestors have done.

LXV

‘ Thy sires’ historic honours thou shalt see,
Up in that steep and solitary place ;
And wilt thou, laggard, lag behind, and be
A tardy runner in the glorious race ?
Up, up ! arouse thyself, and may what I
Depict thereon thy generous heart incite !’
Thus spoke ; and, as he spoke, attentively
Upon the shield Rinaldo fixed his sight.

LXVI

With subtile skill, into a narrow space
The artist had unnumbered forms compressed ;
The august and glorious line of Azzo's race
Was there in chain unbroken manifest.
From its old Roman source each branch renowned,
Limpid and pure, still uncorrupted flows ;
With laurel chaplets are its princes crowned,
Whose deeds in peace and war the old man shows.

LXVII

Caius he shows, when first to foreign bands
The empire fell, already in decline,
The reins of power receive from willing hands,
And the first prince become of Este's line ;
To whom for help his weaker neighbours came,
And him elected ruler over all.
But when the savage Goths recrossed the same
Pass as of yore, at base Honorio's call,

LXVIII

And when all Italy appeared to smoke,
And blaze more fiercely from barbaric fire ;
When Rome, too, crouching 'neath the stranger's yoke,
Feared in the general ruin to expire ;
Shows how Aurelius, his intrepid son,
To guard his subjects' liberty stood forth ;
Shows him Foresto, who opposed the Hun,
Despotic ruler of the distant North.

LXIX

Well by his look fierce Attila is known ;
His eyes like furious dragon's seem to spark ;
Enough it is, his dog-faced features shown,
To swear he snarled, and deem you heard him bark.
Worsted in single fight the savage see,
Back on his armies for protection fall.
Here shows the Hector of fair Italy,
Foresto, guarding Aquilea's wall.

LXX

His death is blazoned elsewhere, and his own,
With it, the ruin of his country draws.
Him Acarino, his great sire's great son,
Succeeds, as champion of the Italian cause ;
Who to fate yielded up, not to the Hun,
Altinum, and to safer quarters fled ;
Then of a thousand houses formed one town,
Erst villas thro' the Po's broad valley spread.

LXXI

Which he with bulwarks fortified, to meet
The rushing river's overflowing rage :
Whence a fair city rose, the destined seat
Of Este's princes in a future age.
He routs the Alani ; but, unfortunate,
By Odoacer is at length cut down,
And dies for Italy. O noble fate !
That made him consort of his sire's renown.

LXXII

With him falls Alphorisio. Azzo here
Is with his brother in sad exile shown ;
But, with fresh arms, behold him reappear,
Soon as the Erulean tyrant is o'erthrown.
Lo ! transfixed by an arrow in the eye,
Este's Epaminondas follows near ;
With what delight the patriot seems to die,
Fierce Totila slain, and saved his buckler dear !

LXXIII

I speak of Boniface ; whose little son,
Valerian, in his father's footsteps trod ;
Nor had a hundred squadrons of the Hun,
So stout his heart and hand, his charge withstood.
Ernesto near, with features stern and hard,
The wild Slavonians gallantly repelled ;
Before him stands intrepid Aldoard,
Who 'gainst the Lombard king Monselce held.

LXXIV

Henry is here, and Berenger ; and where
The royal standard of great Carlo flies,
It seems he is found to strike first blow, and dare,
As chief or soldier, the most dread emprise ;
Then under Lewis serves, who bade him war
Against his nephew, the Italian king ;
Whom he defeated, and made prisoner.
Here Otho is, round whom five children cling.

LXXV

Then Almeric comes ; already Marquis he
Of the fair city that commands the Po ;
Founder of churches, in deep reverie
He stands contemplating the heavens. But, lo !
Azzo the second is in contrast viewed,
Waging 'gainst Berenger embittered war ;
Whom, after varying fortunes, he subdued,
And so became Italia's emperor.

LXXVI

His son Alberto then, in Germany, gains
Such wide extended fame, that as he fought
And beat in war and tournaments the Danes,
Him, for his son-in-law, great Otho bought.
Impetuous Hugo stands behind, who tamed
The horns of Roman arrogance, and who
Shall Marquis of fair Italy be named,
And all the Tuscan provinces subdue.

LXXVII

Tebaldo here, and Bonifacio there,
Is sculptured near his darling Beatrice.
To sire so great, to heritage so fair,
A male successor envious fate denies.
But well Matilda the defect made good
Of numbers and of sex ; the simple gown
She proved how woman, wise and valorous, could
Raise far above the mail-clad monarch's crown.

LXXVIII

Her noble face breathes masculine strength; her glance
Appears to flash with more than manly might :
The Normans here are routed ; the advance
Of Guiscard, yet unconquered, turned to flight ;
Henry the Fourth is by her arm o'erthrown,
By her the temple with his flag is graced ;
And in the Vatican, on Peter's throne,
By her the Sovereign Pontiff is replaced.

LXXIX

Azzo the fifth her follows, or his place
Keeps at her side from reverence and love ;
But the fourth Azzo's fair and fruitful race
In wider and more prosperous branches throve.
Since Guelph, his son, by Cunigond his queen,
To what he deemed Germania's summons yields,
And the good Roman stock is haply seen
By him transplanted to Bavarian fields.

LXXX

Ingrafted thence, from Este's branches grew
The Guelphic tree, already waxing old,
Whose Guelphic offshoots you may see renew,
More bright than e'er, its diadems of gold ;
And by the heavenly light's benignant grace,
No hindrance meeting with, become so tall,
That, level with the sky, it filled the space
Of half Germania, and o'ershadowed all.

LXXXI

Nor less luxuriance seemed the royal tree
In its Italian branches to diffuse ;
Bertoldo here confronting Guelph you see ;
Here the sixth Azzo the old stock renews.
This ends the list of his heroic sires,
That life-like on the breathing ore are wrought ;
Aroused, Rinaldo from his native fires
A thousand sparks of kindred honour caught :

LXXXII

And his proud spirit, burning to renew
His sires' renown, to such a pitch doth rise,
That, as if present, palpable, and true,
That seems to float before his ravished eyes,
Which Fancy's coinage stamped upon the brain :
The city captured—thousands slaughtered—he
Impatient arms, and, in reliant vein,
Usurps anticipated victory.

LXXXIII

Then Charles, who had of Denmark's royal lord
Already told him the sad tragedy,
Placed in his noble hand the destined sword.
'Take it,' he cried, 'and may it prosperous be ;
But only use it for the Christian faith ;
With it, be no less strong than just and true ;
But first avenge its former master's death,
Who loved thee so : this much from thee is due.

LXXXIV

‘ Ah, would to Heaven ! ’ replied the noble knight,
‘ That this my hand, which takes his falchion, may
The murder of its former lord requite,
And with it, its indebtedness repay.’
Charles turning round to him, with look all cheered,
Into few words unmeasured thanks compressed ;
Meanwhile the noble hermit interfered,
And to their midnight march the warriors pressed.

LXXXV

‘ Time ’tis,’ he said, ‘ to go where you await
The captain and the camp in fond suspense ;
Come, for I can your course facilitate
Thro’ the thick darkness to the Christian tents.’
Thus spoke, then mounts his chariot, and admits
The noble knights therein without delay ;
And slacking in his coursers’ mouths the bits,
Lashes them on, and eastward bends his way.

LXXXVI

Through the black air they fly, abstracted, mute,
When to the youth the old man turned and said :
‘ Thou hast seen the branches and the ancient root
Of thy haught lineage from its fountain head ;
Still, tho’ of heroes from Time’s earliest page,
The glad prolific mother it has been,
Its former virtues shall not fail from age,
But shoot forth blossoms, fresh and ever green.

LXXXVII

‘ And would that, as from Time’s mysterious tomb
I have drawn forth thy unknown ancestry,
I could produce, from out the Future’s womb,
The glorious roll of thy posterity,
And to the world proclaim their virtues, ere
Their eyelids dawn upon creation’s light ;
For thou wouldst see a list of heroes there,
Not less in number, nor in deeds less bright.

LXXXVIII

‘ But for the future powerless is my art
To scan the truth, which far too hidden lies,
Except where dimly, as thro’ clouds, a part
Floats like a flickering torch before mine eyes.
To thee if things as certain I detail,
In that believe not I am over bold ;
My knowledge comes from one who, without veil,
At times doth Heaven’s most secret ways behold.

LXXXIX

‘ And that which light divine revealed to him,
He told myself, and I predict to thee ;
For ne’er in this, or in the good old time,
Was Goth or Greek or Latin progeny
Rich in such heroes, as propitious Heaven
Has destined thy descendants to become :
Their brilliant names were never equalled even
By those of Sparta, Carthage, or of Rome.

XC

‘ But, ’mid the rest, Alphonso I select,
In title second, but the first in worth ;
Of men illustrious a complete defect
And rank corruption will precede his birth.
He will be such that paladin was ne’er
Fitter the sword to wield, or sceptre grace,
Or weight of arms or diadem to bear—
The highest, chiefest glory of thy race !

XCI

‘ Boy, he will indicate his chivalry
In various cruel images of war ;
Dread of the woods and of wild beasts he’ll be,
And in the lists prove always conqueror.
Then back from real warfare he will bear
Victorious palms on his triumphal yoke,
And oft his country will adorn his hair
With wreaths of grass, of laurel, and of oak.

XCII

‘ In age mature no less will be his praise
To ’stablish peace and order, and maintain
His cities calm and tranquil ’mid the frays
Of powerful neighbours that around him reign ;
To foster genius, to encourage art,
Dole with just hand reward and punishment ;
To noble games magnificence impart,
And by keen foresight coming ills prevent.

XCIII

‘And, oh ! if e’er against that impious race,
That will infest each land and every sea,
And in those wretched times give laws of peace
To other nations more enlightened, he
March forth, bold champion, full revenge to seek
For shrine destroyed and violated fane,
What heavy retribution would he wreak
On the great tyrant and his sect profane !

XCIV

‘To oppose his power the Moor and Turk might dare,
With myriad armèd legions, but in vain,
Since far beyond the Euphrates he would bear,
Beyond the heights of Taurus’ snowy chain,
Beyond the regions of the torrid zone,
The Cross, white eagle, and gold fleur-de-lys ;
And, to baptize the swarthy fronts, the unknown
Mysterious sources of the Nile would see.’

XCV

Thus the old sage the youthful knight addressed,
Who treasured up his words with heartfelt glee,
Feeling a secret transport in his breast
At the bare thought of such posterity.
Meanwhile Aurora, Phœbus’ herald, rose,
And did the sky with Orient sheen adorn ;
And now the tents, though distant still, disclose
Their streamers, fluttering in the breath of morn.

XCVI

The sage, ere leaving them, began anew :
‘ You see the sun, which brightly shines in front,
And with its friendly beams unfolds to you
The tents, the plain, the city, and the mount.
Secure from all impediment and harm,
By unknown tracks I have brought you safely here :
Now ye can guide yourselves, nor need my arm ;
Approach is not permitted me more near.’

XCVII

Thus he took leave of them, and went away,
Leaving the cavaliers foot soldiers ; whence
They, in direction of the rising day,
Pursued the path that led them to the tents.
Meanwhile fame bore, and in all quarters spread
The expected coming of the three, and on
Before them to the pious Godfred sped,
Who rose to do them honour from his throne.



CANTO XVIII.

I

ARRIVING where the pious chief had gone
To greet his coming, 'Sire,' Rinaldo said,
'Twas jealous care of honour led me on,
To wreak such retribution on the dead ;
If I have offended thee, that fact offends
Me to the quick with penitence and pain ;
Whence at thy call I come, to make amends,
Far as I can thy favour to regain.'

II

Low as he humbly bowed, Prince Godfred cast
His arms around his neck, and thus replied :
' We'll speak no more of byegones, and the past
In the dark grave of mute oblivion hide ;
And for amends, alone thou needest do
Deeds as of yore ; and for the general good,
And to the utter ruin of the foe,
Destroy the monsters of the enchanted wood.

III

‘ That ancient wood, whence formerly we drew
Materials to repair our tools and arms,
Has now (I know not to what causes due)
Become the haunt of formidable charms ;
To fell its timber not the bravest dare,
And ’twere a hopeless task to breach the town
Without such implements. Now thither, where
The others dread, go, prove thy old renown.’

IV

Briefly, when he had ceased, the cavalier
Offered his humble services to lend,
But from his resolute manner it was clear,
How much his actions would his words transcend ;
Then turning round, his comrades’ hands he prest
Within his own most cordially, for there
Tancredi, with Prince Guelpho, and the rest
Of the camp’s paladins, assembled were.

V

But when he had to those of high degree
His warm, sincere acknowledgments conveyed,
‘ With humble and familiar courtesy ’ *
The youth received all those of lower grade ;
Not denser crowds flocked there, nor did each mouth
Thunder forth louder cheers, than if in war
He had conquered all the Orient and the south,
And back returned on his triumphal car.

* Shakspeare.

VI

Escorted thus, he to his tent retired,
And 'mid a group of his dear comrades stood,
And much replied to them, and much enquired,
Now of the war, now of the enchanted wood ;
But when they, leaving, gave the occasion, thus
Spoke the saint hermit : ' Many a wondrous scene
And strange adventures, pilgrim marvellous,
Thou hast in the course of thy long wanderings seen.

VII

' Think what to earth's Almighty King thou ow'st,
Who brought thee safely from the enchanted hold,
And the strayed lamb, that was so nearly lost,
Led back again, and sheltered in his fold ;
And by Prince Godfred's voice selected thee
As second agent of His sovran will :
But 'twere not right in His high ministry
Thy hand to arm, profaned, polluted still.

VIII

' So soiled art thou from earth's impurity,
And from uncleanness of the flesh, not e'en
The Nile, the Ganges, or the soundless sea,
Sufficient were to make thee pure and clean :
God's grace alone can cleanse and purify
Man's unclean state, and wash his sins away ;
Turn then to Him, to Him for grace apply,
Thy secret sins confess, and weep and pray.'

IX

At this, he first within himself laments,
How he in love and anger had transgressed,
Then sadly, and with deepest penitence,
Low at his feet his juvenile sins confessed ;
When, absolution given, Heaven's servant said :
' Depart thou must at early dawn and pray,
There on the summit of yon mount, whose head
Fronts the fresh splendour of the breaking day.

X

' Then to the dread enchanted forest go,
Which in such numbers phantoms false infest ;
Monsters and giants thou'lt o'ercome, I know,
If no new madness thy advance arrest ;
Ah, let no voice, how sweet it weep or sing,
Let not seductive smile or eloquent eyes,
Round thy young heart their fascinations fling,
But their false faces and false prayers despise.'

XI

As the sage counselled, so prepared the knight,
Eager and hopeful for the high emprise,
And the day passed in thought, in thought the night ;
But long before Aurora lit the skies,
He put his gorgeous glittering armour on,
And a new surcoat of strange colours took,
And then on foot, in silence and alone,
His dear companions and his tent forsook.

XII

It was that moment when the unyielding night
Still strove for empire with the crescent morn,
Flushed was the Orient with the dawn's first light,
And still some stars did heaven's expanse adorn ;
When to Mount Olivet he 'gan repair,
With eyes raised up, contemplating around
The nightly here, the matin beauty there,
With incorruptible heavenly splendour crowned.

XIII

And inly thought : ' Oh, what surpassing light
In yon celestial temple we behold ;
The day possesses his great car, the night
Her moon of silver and her stars of gold :
Yet grovelling man nor that nor these doth prize,
But all his thoughts on that dim gleam bestows,
Which flash of smile and lightning of the eyes
In the scant limits of frail face disclose.'

XIV

Thus musing, he to the hill's summit went,
And there, low bending and with reverence, raised
His thoughts sublime beyond the firmament,
And on the east with fervent rapture gazed.
' Father and Lord ! with eye of clemency
This my first life, these my first errors view ;
Shower down, O God, thy favour, and in me
Purge the old Adam, and my heart renew.'

XV

The vermeil dawn, as thus Rinaldo prayed,
Now living gold become, arose in front ;
It gilt his casque and armour, and arrayed
In gold the verdant summit of the mount.
He felt the spirit of the grateful air
With its soft breath his brow and bosom fan,
While o'er his head, wrung from Aurora's hair,
A crystal shower of pearly dewdrops ran.

XVI

Upon his surcoat, that seemed ashes gray,
Heaven's dew fell down and rebaptized the knight,
Washed it, and took its mournful tint away,
And in its place induced a lucid white.
Thus their spoilt foliage withered flowers resume,
Refreshed, recruited, by the matin cold ;
Blithe serpents so renew their youthful bloom,
And gleam bedizened in fresh scales of gold.

XVII

The whiteness of his changed accoutrements
Ev'n he himself with admiration viewed,
And, with bold heart and buoyant confidence,
His course directed towards the antique wood.
He had arrived now where alone the fear
Its sight inspired, the less courageous stayed :
To him not fearful did the wood appear—
No gloom he saw, but only pleasant shade.

XVIII

Onwards he passed, and caught a sound meanwhile
That round diffused most dulcet melody ;
Heard the hoarse murmur of a brawling rill,
And, 'mid the forest's leaves, the breezes sigh ;
Lyres, organs, human voices, and the wail,
The dying wail, of the melodious swan,
With plaintive answer of the nightingale,
And all these various sounds expressed in one.

XIX

As happened to the rest, the cavalier
Expecting was loud thunder's fearful tone,
But did descant of nymphs and sirens hear,
Of air, of water, and of birds alone.
Whence blank bewilderment enchained his feet,
Then slowly he advanced, nor on the road
Did other hindrance or obstruction meet,
Save where a tranquil stream before him flowed.

XX

Odours perfumed, and Nature's choicest charms
Pranked either bank, that sweetly smiled and smelt ;
And the stream so far stretched its circling arms,
That the great forest sat within its belt ;
And not alone a garland round it made,
But a branch parted, and between it flowed :
So, with fair change of water and of shade,
Wood screened the water, water bathed the wood.

XXI

While the knight looked to find a ford, behold !
Spanning the stream, a wondrous bridge appeared ;
A gorgeous bridge of brightly burnished gold,
That formed a road, on massive arches reared.
He crossed the golden passage, which fell down
Soon as his foot had touched the opposite shore,
And the stream, now into a torrent grown,
With it away the crumbling fabric bore.

XXII

He turned, and saw that to a flood profound
Had grown the stream, as if from melted snow,
Which, voluble in itself, whirled round and round,
In thousand eddies, as it dashed below.
Still keen desire of fresh adventure drew
The eager youth that dense old wood to see,
And in that sylvan waste some wonder new
Excited aye his curiosity.

XXIII

Where'er, in passing, did his foot repose,
There flowers sprang up or living crystal gushed ;
Here oped the lily, there burst forth the rose ;
Here water leaped, there in a river rushed :
And o'er and round him the old wood its bloom
Seemed to renew ; the rugged bark was seen
To soften, the whole forest to assume
A look more joyous and a tint more green.

XXIV

With manna rorid was each teeming tree,
And odorous honey from its bark distilled ;
Again that sweet unearthly harmony
The air with song and lamentation filled.
Nor knew he where was hid the human choir,
That with the air, the swan, and waters blent,
Nor saw the organ or mysterious lyre,
Nor those that made such sweet accompaniment.

XXV

But while he gazed round, and belief denied
To what his senses offered him as true,
Standing apart, a myrtle he descried,
Where a piazza closed the avenue ;
Its towering branches the strange myrtle spread
The haughty palm and cypress far above :
There, raising past all other trees its head,
Appeared to be the palace of the grove.

XXVI

In the piazza the knight saw, surprised,
Still greater novelties ; for in the earth
Appeared an oak, that, of itself incised,
Opened its pregnant bosom, and gave birth.
Whence issued forth, arrayed in wondrous guise,
A lovely nymph, in beauty's ripest bloom ;
At the same time a hundred plants he spies,
Producing each a nymph from out its womb.

XXVII

As sylvan goddesses display their charms
Upon the stage, or in some painting fair,
With tucked-up dresses and uncovered arms,
With dainty buskins and dishevelled hair,
The rugged trees' fictitious daughters so
Appeared Rinaldo's startled gaze before,
Save that, instead of quiver and of bow,
A viol this, that lute or cittern bore.

XXVIII

They then began to carol and dance round,
And of themselves inwove a garland, whence
They in their cirque the youthful warrior bound,
As point within its own circumference.
They bound the tree, too, and these words of love
Were all he could, amid their descant, glean :
' Welcome, thrice welcome, to this pleasant grove,
Thou cherished hope and idol of our queen !

XXIX

' Longed for, thou com'st, the patient to restore,
Consumed, exhausted by love's wasting flame :
This wood, so dreary, and so dark before,
And which so well her dolorous life became,
At thy approach resumes its gaiety,
And in still lovelier form is clothed anew.'
Such was the song ; when from the myrtle tree
Issued sweet sounds, and then it oped in two.

XXX

Within Sileni, in the days of yore,
Our sires saw wondrous images enclosed,
But this large myrtle, from its opened core,
A far more rare and lovely form exposed ;
It showed a woman, whose false look excelled
An angel's in its loveliness and grace.
Rinaldo gazed, and fancied he beheld
Armida's likeness, and her witching face.

XXXI

Half glad, half sorrowful, the youth she eyed ;
A thousand feelings centred in one look.
' I see thee, then ; thou, then, at length,' she cried,
' Returnest back to her whom you forsook.
Why art thou here ? Is't by thy presence now
To cheer my widowed nights and mournful days ?
Or to wage war, and drive me hence, that thou
But show'st thine arms, and hid'st thy lovely face ?

XXXII

' Com'st thou as friend or foe ? 'Twas not for foes
I caused the bridge like magic to appear,
Nor oped the stream, the fountain, and the rose,
To smoothe a passage for thy coming here.
Bare, then, thy brow, remove that envious crest,
And, if still friend, fix thy dear eyes on mine ;
Join lip to lip once more, and breast to breast ;
Or take at least this trembling hand in thine.'

XXXIII

She went on still addressing him, and rolled
 (Pallid as death) in piteous cirques her eyes,
Dissembling and deceiving as of old,
 With melting tears, sweet sobs, and deep-drawn sighs.
It would have moved a heart of stone to hear
 The flood of anguish the false siren poured ;
But the forewarned, not heartless, cavalier
 No longer waited, but unsheathed his sword ;

XXXIV

And straight proceeded to the myrtle tree,
 Which she embraced, and, interposing, cried :
' Hold ! nor inflict such outrage upon me ;
 Thou wouldst not, surely, my dear trunk divide ?
Lay down thy sword, or, cruel as thou art,
 Let it the life-blood of Armida drain :
To this dear myrtle, through this breast, this heart,
 Alone a passage can thy falchion gain.'

XXXV

Deaf to her prayer, he raised his sword, while she
 (O novel prodigy !) transformed became.
Thus metamorphosed suddenly we see
 One figure to another in a dream ;
So waxed her limbs, and turned to swarthy hue
 Of her fair face the pink and ivory charms ;
She to a most colossal giant grew—
 Briareus, armèd with a hundred arms.

XXXVI

Fifty broad swords she griped, and fifty shields
Clashed with defiant menace in his ear.
Each other nymph, now horrid Cyclops, wields
Falchion and targe ; but still he felt no fear:
Nay, on the guarded plant renewed his blows,
Which 'neath them groaned, as animate it were ;
While in such numbers ghosts and monsters rose,
That Stygian fields appeared the fields of air.

XXXVII

Beneath, earth thundered ; overhead, the skies
Lightened, and quaked the vast terrestrial sphere ;
Warred the wild elements, and in his eyes
With fury smote him. Still the cavalier
Paused not a moment, tho' the lightning gleamed,
Nor in his stroke or purpose ever erred.
He felled the nut—'tis nut that myrtle seemed—
The charm was broke, the spirits disappeared.

XXXVIII

Heaven fair became, the tempest passed away,
The wood returned unto its natural state :
Not from enchantments dreadful, still not gay ;
Replete with gloom, but gloom that was innate.
Then tried the victor, and retried again,
If aught else hindered him the wood to hew ;
And, smiling, said : ' Ye semblances ! how vain,
How weak is man to be deterred by you ! '

XXXIX

His lonely way then towards the camp pursued,
Where Peter meanwhile cried, excitedly :
' O'ercome's the dread enchantment of the wood—
Returns the victor from his victory.
Lo ! where he comes !' Afar was seen to loom
The snow-white mantle of Bertholdo's son,
And, with unwonted sheen, the silver plume
Of Este's eagle glistened in the sun.

XL

Arrived, the camp acknowledged its delight
By deafening plaudits for the victory won ;
And pious Godfred welcomed back the knight
With highest honours, that were grudged by none.
' Sire,' said Rinaldo, ' to the dreadful wood
I went, and saw it, as thou orderedst me ;
I saw, and its enchantments have subdued :
Send, then, the workmen there—the ways are free.'

XLI

To the old wood they went, and felled each bough
That practised judgment for the purpose chose.
And tho' the unskilled workmen knew not how
The first machines adroitly to compose ;
This time an artist of celebrity
The ponderous beams with pliant withies wove ;
William, the Genoese chief, who on the sea
Was wont as corsair formerly to rove.

XLII

Forced to retire then, to the Saracen
He yielded up dominion of the seas,
And from the ships now brought both arms and men
To the encampment as auxiliaries.
Nor could one, 'mid the most intelligent,
His peer in knowledge of mechanics find ;
With him a hundred minor workmen went,
To execute the plans that he designed.

XLIII

He at once began, not only to compose
Balistæ, catapults, and rams, and each
Machine that could with the high ramparts close,
Destroy their fences, and the bastions breach ;
But made a greater work, a wondrous tower,
With planks of pine and fir enwove inside ;
And to protect it from the fire-balls' shower,
Without, wrapped up in swathes of moistened hide.

XLIV

The fabric takes to pieces and unites,
With joints together joined by subtile art ;
And a huge beam with ram's head tipped, that fights
Ram-like, emerges from the lower part.
Midway leaps forth a bridge, and with such power,
As at first spring to reach the adverse wall ;
And from the top shoots up a lesser tower,
That grows, forced upwards, and looks over all.

XLV

Voluble, on a hundred wheels, to glide
It 'gan along the smoothened ways, and tho'
Pregnant with arms, pregnant with men inside,
Without much labour it appeared to go.
The troops stood watching, with astonied eyes,
The workmen's quickness and dexterity,
When, lo ! two other towers were seen to rise,
That of the first twin sisters seemed to be.

XLVI

Meanwhile the Christians' doings were not al-
Together hidden from the Saracens,
Since, towards the nearest points, upon the wall
Were stationed guards to watch the Franks' designs ;
Great loads of pine and elm trees from the wood
They saw conducted to the Christian host ;
Machines they saw, but not entirely could
Their form distinguish from their distant post.

XLVII

They, too, made engines, and with no less art
The towers and ramparts reinforced again,
And raised them up so, in whatever part
Ill-fitted seemed war's fury to sustain,
That they believed the greatest force of Mars
Henceforth unable was to take the town ;
But, beyond all defence, Ismene prepares
Strange fires upon the assailants to throw down.

XLVIII

The wretch with sulphur did bitumen mix,
Brought from the lake of Sodom ; and to hell
Methinks he went, and from the river Styx,
That nine times girds it, was supplied as well.
Such smoke and stench he in the fire-balls wrought,
Which, burning hot, were darted in the face ;
Well by those dread combustibles he thought
To avenge of his fell'd forest the disgrace.

XLIX

While thus the camp prepared for the assault,
And the beleaguered city for defence,
Lo ! swiftly skimming the aërial vault,
A dove was seen to cross the Gallic tents :
Nor moved her pinions, but with outstretched wing
The pilgrim messenger came sailing down
Through the lush fields of air, as if to bring,
From the high clouds, a message to the town ;

L

When swooped a falcon—from I know not whence,
Armed with great talons and hooked beak, as tho'
To oppose her 'twixt the city and the tents ;
But she awaited not his cruel blow ;
He, darting down, pursued her as she fled
To Godfred's tent, and nearer, nearer drew ;
His talons almost struck her gentle head,
When to the prince's sheltering lap she flew.

LI

Her he protected, as she frightened clung,
And saw, examining, a curious thing ;
For from her neck, bound by a ribbon, hung
A folded letter hid beneath her wing ;
He opes, unfolds it, and the not long whole
Of its contents completely comprehends.
'To Judah's lord' (so ran the secret scroll)
'The Egyptian captain health and greeting sends.

LII

'Do not despair, O king, resist, and wait
For four days longer, or for five at most,
When I will come these walls to liberate,
By conquering 'neath them the besieging host.'
This was the secret which the missive bore,
In rude barbaric characters displayed,
And to the dove entrusted ; for of yore
Such envoys letters in the East conveyed.

LIII

Prince Godfred set the captive turtle free,
Who having thus her master's secrets bared,
To him a rebel deemed herself to be,
Nor to return, unsuccessful envoy, dared.
The greater chief did then the minor call,
Showed them the letter, and exclaimed : 'Behold,
How the high providence of God has all
The foe's designs to His believers told.

LIV

‘We must no more, then, dally or delay,
But new approaches ’gainst the heights commence,
Nor spare fatigue or trouble, that we may
O’ercome the crags that form the south’s defence ;
Hard it may be to make a path there ; still,
Make it we can : the ground is known to me ;
Be sure that wall, protected by the hill,
With arms and works must less defended be.

LV

‘Thou must, Raimondo, the steep ramparts storm,
With thy machines, on that less guarded part,
While I my force, in line extended, form
’Gainst the north gate ; deluded by which art,
The baffled foe may tranquilly await
Our chief attack and greatest efforts there,
While I my easy-moving tower translate
Some distance off, and carry war elsewhere.

LVI

‘At the same time, Camillus, I rely
That the third tower thou bring not far from mine.’
He ceased, when Raymond, who was sitting nigh,
And weighed, as he was speaking, his design,
Exclaimed : ‘We cannot add to or amend
Prince Godfred’s plan, save one thing more, which I
Venture to add, that we should some one send,
The secrets of the hostile camp to spy,

LVII

‘Who may recount their numbers, and divine,
Far as he can, the purpose of our foes.’
Tancredi added : ‘There’s a squire of mine
Whom for this office I would fain propose ;
Ready, adroit, and light of foot he is,
And daring—but discretionally daring ;
He speaks in many tongues, and can disguise
His real voice, his movements, and his bearing.’

LVIII

Summoned, he came, and when he understood
That which Prince Godfred and his lord desired,
He smiled with confidence, and said he would
With pleasure undertake the charge required.
‘Unrecognised as spy, I will be soon
Where that camp’s tents are pitched ; I’ll penetrate
Into their works by the broad light of noon,
And every man and horse enumerate.

LIX

‘The numbers and condition of that host,
And their chief’s thoughts, I promise to impart ;
His inmost sense to bring to light I boast,
And wrest the closest secrets from his heart.’
Vafrino tarried not, as thus he spoke,
But made display of a bare neck, exchanged
His simple doublet for a flowing cloak,
And folds of linen round his brow arranged.

LX

A Syrian bow and quiver round him slung,
Barbaric seemed his every gest : beside
So versed he was, and quick in every tongue,
That those who heard him speak were stupefied ;
In Tyre Phœnician, or in Memphis all
Had him Egyptian deemed. Upon a horse
Away he rode, whose feet so lightly fall,
That in the sand one scarce could track their course.

LXI

Before the third day dawned, the Franks had made
Level the steep and broken ways, and there
Had even their immense machines conveyed,
Since their fatigues uninterrupted were ;
Nay, joined they had to labour of the day,
Stealing it from the hours of rest, the night ;
Nor was there aught that could them more delay
From making final trial of their might.

LXII

Much of the day preceding the attack
In solemn prayer the pious Buglion spent,
And bade the host confess their sins, and take
At the Lord's table the soul's sacrament.
The greatest demonstration he then made,
Where least to employ his huge machines he thought ;
Deluded whence, the Turks with joy surveyed
Against the strongest gate his engines brought.

LXIII

Then when dark night had spread her ebon pall,
He had his huge machine transported where
Less luniform and salient was the wall,
Nor angles nor projecting outworks were.
With his armed turret, Raymond far and wide
The town commanded from the mountain's crest ;
Camillus his advanced upon that side
Which from the north bends somewhat to the west.

LXIV

But when the matin herald of the day
Had in the east proclaimed the coming dawn,
The Pagans saw, and saw to their dismay,
That the tower was from its old place withdrawn ;
Here, too, they saw another mass oppose
Its frowning front, and there another stood,
While rams, cats, catapults, balistæ rose
In countless numbers in the neighbourhood.

LXV

At this the Syrian people were not slack
Thither divers defences to transfer,
Where Godfred now directed his attack,
From where his engines first paraded were.
But he, remembering that the Egyptian host
Lay in his rear, that pass had occupied ;
And calling Guelph and the two Roberts : ' Post
Your squadrons here, and take good care,' he cried,

LXVI

'That while I means to scale the ramparts find,
Where the defences not so strong appear,
There be no force that, coming from behind,
Pours unexpected battle on our rear.'
He ceased, and from three sides three columns closed,
To storm the walls of the devoted town.
From three sides, too, his hordes the king opposed,
Who wore that day his arms, long since laid down.

LXVII

He whose frail body tottering was from years,
And its inertness in its own weight shows,
Arms, which he long since had abandoned, bears,
And against Raymond's force in person goes.
'Gainst Godfred, Solyman ; Arganté sped
To meet the assault of brave Camillus, who
By Boemon's nephew was accompanied,
Whom Fortune led to slay his destined foe.

LXVIII

The archers first began the dire attack
With showers of poisoned shafts, that seemed to shroud
The azure sky, which suddenly grew black
Beneath the arrows' intervening cloud ;
But with more deadly force, the fiercest shocks
Came from the mural engines, whence huge balls,
Of marble made, and massy ponderous oaks,
With iron tipt, were launched against the walls.

LXIX

A rattling thunderbolt seemed every stone,
And so crashed limbs and armour where it fell,
As to annihilate not life alone,
But shape of body and of face as well.
Nor paused the missiles in their bloody route
At the impact, but passed with unslaked might
In at one side and through the other out,
Bequeathing death in their remorseless flight.

LXX

Still that fierce onslaught did not drive away
From their defence the Saracens ; each brings
Against the rams that on the ramparts play
Elastic stuffs, and other yielding things.
Whence finding no resistance as they closed,
The furious strokes grew fainter and more slack ;
While they, where'er the Franks were most exposed,
With flying arms sent bitter answer back.

LXXI

But all their efforts ineffectual were
The three assaulting columns to restrain,
Which keep advancing under mantlets, where
Fell down the densest showers of shafts in vain ;
Some bring the towers close to the rampart's ridge,
And them the Turks with all their might shove back :
Each turret now attempts to launch its bridge ;
Ram-like, the iron-headed rams attack.

LXXII

Meanwhile Rinaldo paused, irresolute,
Deeming such risks unworthy of his fame,
And that it would detract from his repute
To advance with crowds, and by a path the same :
Whence, looking round him, he resolved to try
Alone that way that made the rest despair,
Determined where the ramparts are most high,
And most defended, his assault to bear.

LXXIII

And turning round to those famed warriors, who
Were formerly by Prince Dudoné led :
'Shame, shame ! amid such feats of arms, that you
Let yonder wall abide in peace,' he said.
'To the courageous every path is plain,
And every danger to true valour yields ;
Let us then on, and 'gainst their arrowy rain
A tortoise form with our united shields.'

LXXIV

At once all joined him at that sharp reproof,
And raised their shields above their heads, to form,
By thus conjoining them, an iron roof
Against the pelting of that horrid storm.
Sheltered beneath it, the impetuous band
Dashed on, and nothing could arrest their course,
Since the testudo's solid roof sustained
All that fell down with weightiest deadliest force.

LXXV

Beneath the walls they are. Rinaldo now
Rears a huge ladder, formed of many a rung ;
Wind moves less easily an aspen bough,
Than his strong arm the unwieldy burden swung.
Now bolts, beams, columns, bastions, plunge below,
But vainly are to check his progress thrown ;
Fearless, unmoved, he had persisted, tho'
Olympus, joined with Ossa, had fallen down.

LXXVI

Upon his shield a mount in ruins breaks ;
With groves of shafts his shoulders are o'erspread ;
With one hand he the adjacent rampart shakes,
And lifts the other to protect his head.
His bold example his companions fires
To daring deeds ; nor doth he mount alone :
To scale the walls each gallant Frank aspires,
But not on all the same good fortune shone.

LXXVII

Some die—some fall : sublime Rinaldo fights,
Cheers on his own, and flouts the adverse bands,
And mounts so high, that the embattled heights
He grasps already with extended hands.
Great numbers now push, press, repress, and try
To hurl—but can't—the hero from his post.
Strange sight ! a single being to descry,
Pendent in air, resist a compact host !

LXXVIII

Resist, advance, make good his ground doth he ;
The combat seemed his youthful blood to fire ;
Like palm borne down by weights, his gallantry
But mounted up, from being depressed, the higher.
At length he vanquished all his foes, and burst
Thro' every obstacle, and on the rim
Sprang of the wall, and mastered it the first,
And made it safe for those that followed him.

LXXIX

And he himself, with scarcely room to stand,
To Godfred's brother, who seemed like to fall,
Stretched out his friendly and victorious hand,
And helped him second to ascend the wall.
Meanwhile to Godfred had occurred elsewhere
Fortunes diverse, with varied perils fraught ;
Since not alone with man, man battled there,
But ev'n the engines with each other fought.

LXXX

Upon the walls the Turks a trunk had slung,
That had the mast of some great vessel been,
To which, transversely, a huge beam was swung,
With iron shod : this terrible machine,
Being first drawn back by ropes, then forward fell,
Heavy and hard, in its resistless route ;
At times the tortoise entered in its shell,
At times, with neck extended, darted out.

LXXXI

Upon the tower outleaped the monster beam,
And 'gan such fierce, such terrible attack,
That each well-woven, strongly knitted seam,
It caused to gape, and forced the turret back.
Prepared, however, for such risks it stood,
Nor failed with two great sickles to retort ;
Which, launched forth skilfully against the wood,
The cordage cut that formed its sole support.

LXXXII

As an enormous boulder that decay
Has loosed, or wind uprooted from some mount,
Comes crashing down, and with it sweeps away
Woods, cattle, cots ; so from the frowning front
Of the high wall o'erwhelmed the horrid block
Arms, soldiers, merlons, as down, down it bounded !
Once, twice the turret trembled at the shock :
The ramparts quaked, the echoing hills resounded.

LXXXIII

Godfred pushed on triumphantly ahead,
Already deeming that the walls were won ;
But felt, as on his followers he led,
Right in his face dense fetid fireballs thrown ;
Ne'er from cavernous Mongibello rise
Such torrents of sulphureous lava ; ne'er
Such reeking vapours rain from Indian skies
When summer heats inflame the arid air.

LXXXIV

Alive with fire are vases, hoops, and spears,
These lurid black, these bright and bloody red ;
Smoke blinds their eyes, the whizzing stuns their ears,
The stench is poisonous, the flames catch and spread.
The moistened hides will prove but poor defence
To save the tower : small aid they render—see !
They sweat, they shrivel ; and if Providence
His help delay, all must consumèd be.

LXXXV

The noble leader, all his troops before,
Stood without change of colour or of place,
Cheering them on the crackling skins to pour
Water, provided against such a case.
Such sad condition were they brought down to,
That even now of water there was lack,
When, lo ! a wind, that of a sudden blew,
Against its authors drove the wild fire back.

LXXXVI

The whirlwind blew against the fire, which turned
Back on the soft materials which the Turks
Hung from the walls ; soon caught they were and burned,
Depriving thus of all defence their works.
Oh, glorious captain ! whom the Almighty Lord
Protecteth so, and so esteemeth dear,
For thee unsheathed is Heaven's immortal sword,
Thy trumpet's call the obedient breezes hear.

LXXXVII

But impious Ismene, who beheld the breeze
Against himself drive back the sulphurous rain,
Resolved once more to try his sorceries
The adverse wind and nature to constrain.
So, 'twixt two witches that attended him,
He showed himself upon the walls ; his beard
Was foul, and he so squalid was and grim,
That Pluto 'twixt two Furies he appeared.

LXXXVIII

To mutter those dread words he had begun
So feared by Styx and Phlegethon ; and now
The air became unsettled, and the sun
With clouds obscure begirt his radiant brow,
When there was launched forth an enormous rock,
Part of a mountain, from the tower of wood,
Which caught them in such manner that the stroke
Made of the three one mass of bones and blood.

LXXXIX

Into such small and bloody bits were smashed
Their impious heads, so broken all their bones,
That corn was never more completely mashed
Beneath the weight of the revolving stones ;
With many a curse and groan the spirits fell,
Left the serene and sunshine of the sky,
And howling fled to the black shades of hell.
Hence learn, presumptuous mortals ! piety.

XC

Meanwhile the turret, which the friendly squall
Saved from the flames, approached the town so near,
That it was able on the embattled wall
To place and firmly fix its bridge ; but there
Like lightning rushed intrepid Solyman :
To cut it down redoubled were his blows,
And sure the narrow pass he had cut down,
But that another tower before him rose.

XCI

The mighty mass increasing past the height
Of highest fabrics, shot into the air.
The Saracens at the portentous sight
Of Salem lower, panic-stricken were ;
But tho' on him the stones fell thick and hard,
The fiery Turk would not desert his post,
Nor to cut down the fatal bridge despaired,
And chid and cheered the cowards of the host.

XCII

The Archangel Michael, visible to none,
Appearèd then before Prince Godfred's sight,
Clad in such glistering armour, that the sun,
Altho' unclouded, had appeared less bright.
'The hour has come, O pious prince,' he cries,
'From her fell yoke Jerusalem to free ;
Droop not, nay, droop not thy bedazzled eyes :
See with what forces Heaven assisteth thee.

XCIII

‘ Lift up thine eyes, then, and behold the immense
Immortal host assembled in the sky,
While the thick clouds that dim thy mortal sense,
And overshadow thy humanity,
I will asunder rend, that thou mayst there
Regard unbodied spirits face to face,
And the divine effulgent radiance bear,
Of angels’ beauty for a little space.

XCIV

‘ Behold yon spirits that Christ’s champions were,
Now blest immortal tenants of the skies,
Combat with thee, with thee still seek to share
The crowning honour of the great emprise ;
Lo, where the dust with wreaths of smoke unites,
And o’er the crumbling ruin darkly lowers ;
In that dense cloud the gallant Hugo fights,
And shaketh the foundations of the towers.

XCV

‘ There, as in life, the lofty northern gate
Dudoné see with fire and sword assail,
Arm the assailants and them animate,
The scaling ladders which he holds, to scale ;
He, who enrobed in venerable stole,
And crowned with mitre, stands upon the hill,
Is Bishop Ademar, thrice happy soul !
See how on you he signs his blessing still.

XCVI

‘Lift up still higher thy glowing eyes, upon
Heaven’s host entire together joined.’ Whence he
Looked up, and saw them all drawn out in one
Innumerable, wingèd soldiery.
In three great squadrons, each extended wide,
And in three ranks, was ranged the heavenly host,
Which more extended, as the more outside
The circles were, and least where innermost.

XCVII

Here he cast down, o’erpowered, then raised his eyes,
Nor more the glorious spectacle could see,
But looking round upon his troops, descries
That from all sides on them shone victory.
Some followed where Rinaldo led the way,
And slew the Syrians that dared make a stand.
Godfred at this could brook no more delay,
But snatched an ensign from its bearer’s hand,

XCVIII

And was the first to pass the bridge ; on it
The soldan stood, his passage to oppose ;
Small space sufficed for valour infinite,
Which for its proof required not many blows.
‘For others’ lives,’ cried fiery Solyman,
‘My own I give a sacrifice to be ;
Cut down the bridge behind me, tho’ alone,
No easy victim shall they find in me.’

XCIX

But, seeing towards him irate Rinaldo wend,
And that the Turks before him frightened fled,
'What shall I do? If here my life I spend,
I spend and waste it uselessly,' he said.
Then planning new defences backward falls,
And yields free passage to the chief across :
Who, threatening, followed, and on Salem's walls
Planted the standard of the Sacred Cross.

C

The victor ensign waved in myriad wreaths
Proudly, as conscious of the victory won ;
On it the air, it seemed, more softly breathes,
On it more brilliantly to shine the sun ;
And every lance and arrow launched 'gainst it
Seemed or to shun it or rebound from thence :
And Sion and the mountain opposite
Their heads to bow, with joy and reverence.

CI

From the whole force then burst triumphant cheers
At their great joyous victory : and among
The hills, in answer to the cavaliers'
Last shouts, reverberating echoes rung.
At the same moment Tancred overthrew
All the defences that Arganté made,
And his bridge launching forth, passed swiftly too,
And on the walls the purple Cross displayed.

CII

But, towards the south, where hoary Raymond fought
With varying odds against the Syrian king,
As yet the Gascon cavaliers could not
Up to the battlements their turret bring,
Since the king's troops, with stubborn resolute will,
All efforts of the enemy defied :
And if the wall was there less solid, still,
With engines it was better fortified.

CIII

Besides that greater hindrance in that part
Than elsewhere the unwieldy turret found ;
Nor could their utmost exercise of art
O'ercome the rugged nature of the ground.
Meanwhile, the Gascons and the Pagans too
Heard victory's loud and long-continued strain,
From which both Raymond and the tyrant knew
The city had been taken towards the plain.

CIV

Whence with a cheer, ' Hark ! hark ! the city's won,'
To his companions gallant Raymond cries ;
' Won, shall it us resist ? Shall we alone
Not share the honour of the great emprise ?'
Despairing of prolonged defence, at length
King Aladine retreated, nor did halt
Until he reached a fortress of great strength,
Where he still trusted to sustain the assault.

CV

Then entered pell-mell the victorious host
Thro' the wide gates, not by the walls alone,
Since every strong defence, each sheltered post,
Now open lay, burnt, battered, overthrown ;
Here stalked the falchion's Fury, there Death goes,
By Mourning and Despair accompanied ;
In clotted pools here stagnates blood, there flows
In rivers from the dying and the dead.



CANTO XIX.

I

NOW death, or prudence, or o'erwhelming dread
Had all the Turks removed from the defence.
On the won walls alone Arganté stayed,
With dogged and persistent confidence.
Still, with unflinching look and resolute eye,
He sought the sad disaster to redeem.
He feared to be driven backward, not to die ;
And, even dying, would unconquered seem.

II

But, bitterer far than all his enemies,
On came Tancredi, and resumed their feud ;
Nor was Arganté slow to recognise,
By the proud bearing, arms, and attitude,
The knight he had fought with, and who promised
In six days to return, nor kept his plight.
Whence : ' Is it thus thou keepest faith ?' he said,
' Is it thus returns Tancredi to the fight ?'

III

‘Late thou return’st, and not alone, still I
Grudge not another trial of thy might,
Altho’ thou seemest, in a soldier’s eye,
More like inventor of machines than knight ;
But bring strange arms and engines to this spot,
Go make a shield of thy mechanic bands ;
Ev’n then, bold slayer of women, thou shalt not
Again escape destruction at my hands.’

IV

Tancredi smiled with most profound disdain,
And in these haughty terms replied : ‘Tho’ be
Late my return, yet well assured remain
That soon enough it will appear to thee ;
Nay, thou wilt wish that ’twixt thyself and me
Vast oceans rolled, or Alps rose up, since here,
By bitter proof, bold braggart, thou shalt see
If I was stopped by cowardice or fear.

V

‘Stand forth, then, thou that deignest to chastise
Giants, and doughty demigods alone :
Thee to thy teeth the woman-slayer defies.’
Thus him addressed ; then, turning to his own,
Bade them retire, and their revenge forego,
Nor hurt Arganté, or in life or limb :
‘For he is less public than my private foe :
Old reckonings bind me closely unto him.’

VI

‘Ev’n as thou wilt, escorted or alone,
Come down,’ the savage Saracen replied :
‘Select the ground most crowded or most lone ;
Whate’er the odds, I do not quit thy side.
Received the challenge, in such terms conveyed,
They went concordant to the mortal strife,
Accompanied by rancorous Hate, who made
One foe the champion of the other’s life.

VII

Great was the zeal for fame, great the desire
For the Turk’s blood that Tancred’s bosom filled,
Who deemed he could not slake his thirst for ire,
If by another’s hand one drop were spilled.
Him with his shield he covered, shouting : ‘No—
Strike not !’ to those far off. Thus safe from harms,
At length he rescued his most mortal foe
From his friends’ angered and victorious arms.

VIII

They left, their shoulders turning on the town,
And on the Christian camp, descending where
A zigzag pathway led them gently down,
By many a secret turn and winding ; there
They found a narrow and umbrageous glade,
Buried among the hills, as though it were
A spacious theatre, on purpose made
For bull-baiting or mimic scenes of war.

IX

Here they both halted, and in sad suspense
Arganté turned towards the afflicted town ;
But seeing the Turk without his shield's defence,
Tancredi nobly flung away his own.
Then said : 'What thoughts oppress thee ? dost thou think
The hour is come prescribed for thee by Fate ?
If that foreseeing, thou, dismayed, dost shrink,
Thy fears are now ill-seasoned and too late.'

X

'I think on yonder city,' he replied,
'Judæa's glorious and time-honoured Queen,
Which, conquered, falls ; while vainly I have tried
Her fate-appointed downfall to sustain.
Ev'n thy proud head, which Heaven now destines me,
To my despite is small atonement due.'
He ceased : the knights advanced most cautiously,
Since each his adversary's prowess knew.

XI

In frame Tancredi is most lithe and light,
Quick with his hands and most swift-footed ; him
The brawny Pagan far exceeds in height,
In magnitude and massiveness of limb.
Collected, crouching, Tancred traversed round,
As if to get beneath his guard he tried,
And with his own his foeman's falchion found,
Which he strained every means to turn aside.

XII

But bolt upright the fierce Circassian stood,
And with like skill, but unlike manner, fought ;
With arm stretched out far as at least he could,
Tancredi's body, not his sword, he sought,
Who every moment new approaches tried ;
But he, with sword directed toward his face,
Kept him at bay, and, menacing, denied
Each furtive entrance and each sudden pass.

XIII

Thus when no zephyr curls the glassy sea,
The tempest o'er, two ships are seen to fight,
Altho' unequal, with equality,
Since what this gains from speed, that has in height ;
This to the charge returns a thousand times, and veers
From stem to stern ; unmoved, the other bides,
And when the dwarf its giant rival nears,
Hurls down destruction from its lofty sides.

XIV

While to rush in again the Latin tries,
And beat the blade that gleams before him back,
Arganté thrusts his sword, and 'gainst his eyes
Directs its point ; he parries the attack :
But with such violence the Pagan aimed,
That ere the Christian champion had recoiled,
He struck his side, and shouted, seeing him maimed,
'At his own game behold the fencer's foiled.'

XV

'Twixt shame and rage Tancredi was consumed,
And cast aside all caution ; with such heat
For quick revenge his fiery spirit fumed,
That tardy triumph he had deemed defeat.
His sword alone replied to that rebuke,
Where the barred ventayle light admits : his aim
Arganté parried ; when, with resolute look,
'Gainst him Tancredi at half sword's length came.

XVI

Athwart his left foot rapidly he passed,
And with his left hand seized Arganté's right,
And with his right hand mortally, at last,
The right side wounded of the Pagan knight.
'That's the foiled fencer's answer,' he replied,
'To his triumphant master in the fray.'
Arganté roaring, writhing, struggling, tried
To get—but failed—his captive arm away.

XVII

His sword, then, leaving pendent by its chain,
From underneath, the gallant Frank he grasped ;
Who did the same ; with all their might and main
In mortal struggle they each other clasped.
Alcides ne'er, upon the arid sands,
The mighty giant with more force upheaved,
Than that with which the rivals' nervous hands
In various forms tenacious knots enweaved.

XVIII

So fiercely wrestled the twined combatants,
That both together fell upon the heath ;
Arganté had, by management or chance,
His right hand uppermost, his left beneath.
But as Tancredi's sword-arm crippled lay
Beneath the Turk's superincumbent weight,
The risk and disadvantage seen, away
He freed himself, and sprung upon his feet.

XIX

Not near so quick got up the Saracen,
Who ere he rose received a slashing blow ;
But as its leafy head the pliant pine
Bends and upraises to the east wind, so
Arganté's valour more sublimely rose,
When stricken down he again so nearly fell ;
The desperate pair once more in combat close,
Which, void of art, became more horrible.

XX

Blood ran from Tancred in more spots than one,
But from the Pagan poured almost a flood,
Who, like a fire ill-nourished, had begun
To feel his fury wane with loss of blood.
Tancredi, seeing what little strength possessed
His languid arm, as fainter grew each stroke,
Banished all wrath from his magnanimous breast,
Drew back some paces, and thus kindly spoke :

XXI

‘Yield thee, undaunted man, and recognise,
From strength or chance, thy conqueror in me :
In thy defeat I seek no spoil, no prize,
No right of conquest I reserve o’er thee.’
At this the Turk, more terrible than e’er,
His gathered fury flashing from his face,
Exclaimed : ‘What ! vaunt to have the best, and dare
Arganté tempt with offers of disgrace !

XXII

‘Thy fortune use, since I from fear am free,
And yet will thy impertinence chastise.’
Like flickering torch that in extremity
Revives a moment, then all splendour dies,
So, heating with fresh ire his ebbing blood,
He did his sinking strength invigorate ;
His parting hour, approaching fast, he would
With one last brilliant act commemorate.

XXIII

Joining his left hand with its fellow right,
He drave a blow with both conjoined in one ;
Down fell his sword, and tho’ the Christian knight
Opposed his own, it forced it, and passed on ;
Thro’ shoulder, ribs, that single stroke impressed
Full many wounds upon the cavalier.
If Tancred feared not, his audacious breast
Nature had made incapable of fear.

XXIV

He then redoubled the terrific blow,
But to the winds its force was idly spent,
Since Tancred watching, ere it fell below,
Sprang on one side, and balked his dread intent :
While downwards dragged by thy unwieldy weight,
Thou didst, Arganté, on the greensward sprawl,
Thro' thy own act laid low, thus fortunate
That there was none could vaunt him of thy fall.

XXV

His open wounds the fall dilated wide,
From them the blood in welling torrents poured ;
He fixed his left hand on the ground, and tried,
Raised on one knee, to use once more his sword.
'Yield thee,' again the courteous conqueror cried,
Nor took advantage. To this fresh appeal
The treacherous Turk with stealthy stroke replied,
And struck his generous rival in the heel.

XXVI

Who, bursting forth into a fury, said :
'Villain, is it thus my mercy you abuse ?'
And thro' his vizor plunged and plunged his blade,
Than which more certain way he could not choose.
Thus died Arganté : as he lived, so died—
Dying, he threats, nor languishes in death ;
Made up of hate, ferocity, and pride,
Were his last struggles and his parting breath.

XXVII

His sword Tancredi sheathed, and reverently
Gave thanks to Jesus for the honour gained ;
But that ensanguined hard-fought victory
The victor's lifeblood had so nearly drained,
He feared his failing forces would not bear
The motion of the journey : still he went,
And step by step, with faint and feeble air,
His wearied course by the old pathway bent.

XXVIII

Drag on his frame he could no more, and weak
And weaker grew the more he persevered ;
Whence down he sat upon the ground, his cheek
Propped by his arm, which trembling reed appeared.
All things before his swimming eyes whirled round,
Into dim shadows changed the waning light ;
Nor could one well distinguish, when he swooned,
Which was the victor, which the vanquished knight.

XXIX

While here the lonely fight was taking place,
That private cause so sanguinary made,
Throughout the city 'gainst the impious race
The victors' ire its virulence displayed.
But who could scene so harrowing portray
As what the storm and sack brought forth to light ?
What tongue in language adequate convey
The awful horrors of that piteous sight ?

XXX

Carnage had choked the town, no spot was leer,
Corpses were piled in mounds, in masses spread ;
There lay the wounded on the slain, and here
The wounded buried 'neath the unburied dead.
Their babes more closely trembling mothers squeezed,
As with loose locks they fled in wild despair.
The spoilers, gorged with spoil and rapine, seized
The shrinking maidens by their flowing hair.

XXXI

But thro' the streets that toward the highest hill
Westward ascend, where the great temple stands,
Horrid and wet with blood, unsated still,
Rinaldo drove the flying Pagan bands.
O'er their armed heads that hero whirled his sword,
And 'mong their ranks caused massacre immense ;
But poor protection helm and shield afford,
Nay, want of arms is now the best defence.

XXXII

Alone on steel his noble steel descended,
He scorned the unarmed rabble to chastise ;
Whom courage armèd not nor arms defended,
By dreadful voice he chased, and flashing eyes.
There wondrous deeds of valour you might see,
How menaced, spurned, and slew the youthful knight,
And with unequal risk how equally
Armed and unarmed alike he put to flight.

XXXIII

Already a strong troop, the army's flower,
Had with the rabble to that temple gone,
Which, oft burnt down and oft rebuilt, still bore
The name of its first founder, Solomon.
On it of yore were lavished cost and skill,
Most precious marbles, cedarn wood, and gold ;
Now not so rich as formerly, but still,
From towers and iron gates, a stout stronghold.

XXXIV

Reaching this keep, to which from all around
The crowds had fled for refuge, the great knight
Found all its portals closely barred, and found
Defences bristling on its lofty height.
Casting his eyes upon the edifice,
He twice the whole from top to bottom scanned,
To find some narrow entrance there, and twice
With rapid feet the pile's vast circuit spanned.

XXXV

As plundering wolf, the honest daylight past,
Prowls round the fold with stealthy step at night,
Parched are whose greedy jaws, whose lengthened fast
His innate rage and cruelty incite ;
So looked he round some secret pass to spy
(No matter rough or smooth), then made a halt
In the great square ; the trembling crowds on high
Expecting every moment the assault.

XXXVI

(For whatsoever use or purpose kept)
Upon one side a beam colossal lay,
Nor did the largest vessel that e'er swept
Liguria's coast such lofty mast display.
This towards the massive gate the cavalier
Moved with that arm to which all weights are light,
And, poising it as 'twere a simple spear,
It forward drove with all his main and might.

XXXVII

Marble could not, nor metal, stand before
The thundering blows, that ever grew more great ;
The sounding hinges from the rock they tore,
Burst the lock open, and banged down the gate.
No battering-ram had vaunted to do more,
No bomb, Death's bolt, had more destruction spread ;
Thro' the opened way, like a great torrent, pour
His troops, and follow where the victor led.

XXXVIII

Then frightful carnage black and mournful made
That lofty fane, which was Jehovah's erst.
O Heaven ! how much more heavy, when delayed,
Upon the impious do thy judgments burst.
Thy providence aroused their wrathful mood,
And pious hearts to cruelty constrained ;
The impious Pagans washed now with their blood
That temple their idolatry profaned.

XXXIX

Meanwhile to that huge pile called David's Tower
Prince Solyman had gone, and there essayed,
Assembling the last remnant of his power,
The neighbouring streets to block and barricade.
There, too, the tyrant Aladine had gone,
Whom, when he saw him, Solyman addressed :
'Come, famous king, come hither, and upon
This keep impregnable in safety rest.

XL

'Here from the violence of hostile swords
Thou mayst assure thy safety and thy crown.'
'Alas, alas !' he said, 'barbaric hordes
Have shaken to its base our regal town.
My life, and with it my dominions fall ;
I have lived and reigned—I live and reign no more :
Too truly we can say, We were—to all
Has come the destined day, the fatal hour.'

XLI

Angered at that, the soldan thundered : 'Say
Whither, O king, is thy old valour flown ;
Let hostile Fate our kingdoms take away :
Is not still innate royalty our own ?
But here within from further toil repose
Thy wearied limbs.' Thus spoke, and bade them bring
(Dreading his capture by the advancing foes)
Within the guarded sill the aged king.

XLII

His iron mace then grasping with both hands,
His trusty sword replacing on his flank,
At the dread pass the intrepid soldan stands,
The blocked-up streets to hold against the Frank.
Mortal were all the dreadful strokes it sped ;
If it slew not, it levelled to the ground ;
From the barred precincts all, despairing, fled,
When they the frightful mace approaching found.

XLIII

When, lo ! attended by a valorous few,
Up came Raimondo, county of Toulouse,
And boldly to the perilous passage flew,
Scorning the weight of those terrific blows,
And gave first blow ; but gave it all in vain :
But not in vain the second smiter smote,
Since caught his brow, upon the bloody plain
He laid him quivering, with his arms stretched out.

XLIV

At length that courage fear had chased away
To the defeated Turks returned again,
And the Frank victors were repulsed, or they
Fell at the entrance of the fortress, slain.
But Solymano, who among the dead
Saw lying the half-lifeless warrior,
Cried to his knights : ' Within the barricade
Let him be carried, and made prisoner.'

XLV

Forward they sprang to execute the deed,
But the task difficult and dangerous found ;
Since not neglectful in the hour of need,
Raimondo's followers their fallen lord surround.
Mad fury there, here pious duty fought ;
Nor was the cause unworthy of the strife,
Since these to guard his life and freedom sought,
Those to destroy both liberty and life.

XLVI

Still stubborn for revenge, the soldan would
At length have crowned his efforts with success ;
Not doubled shield or finest helmet could
Withstand the fury of his thundering mace ;
But that he saw the adverse forces get
New and most powerful succour in the fight,
Since from two opposite points together met
The sovran captain and the peerless knight.

XLVII

Like herd, who, seeing round him lightning play,
And wind and thunder threaten coming rain,
And countless clouds obscure the light of day,
Leads back his cattle from the open plain,
Seeking, solicitous, some sheltering nook,
Where he may safely 'scape Heaven's wrathful blast ;
And, guiding them by cries and with the crook,
Urges them on, and is himself the last ;

XLVIII

The Pagan so, when, hopeless, he beheld
The inevitable storm, and heard the sound
That to the heavens in horrid menace swelled,
And saw the arms that bristled all around,
Sent on his soldiers guarded to the tower,
And was himself the last that persevered ;
He left the last, so yielding to their power,
That, altho' cautious, gallant he appeared.

XLIX

Scarce with great travail had he shelter got
Within the gates—they scarcely bolted were—
When burst the bars, Rinaldo faltered not,
But gained the threshold, nor ev'n halted there.
Zeal to surpass him unsurpassed before,
And his vow, led him every nerve to strain ;
Since not forgotten was the oath he swore,
Vengeance to wreak on him who slew the Dane.

L

And then, ev'n then, the unconquered boy had tried
To take, altho' impregnable, the wall ;
Nor safe, perhaps, were Solyman inside,
From his predestined foe ; but hark, a call !
The captain's clarions sounded a retreat,
And the horizon all around grew black ;
His troops Prince Godfred bivouacked in the street,
So as at sunrise to renew the attack.

LI

And them addressed in joyous cheering strains :

‘ Almighty God has blest His host’s career ;

The worst is over, and there now remains

Little for us to do, and nought to fear.

The tower—last anchor of the infidel

We’ll storm to-morrow, at the dawn of day ;

Meanwhile let pity, all who hear, impel

To tend with zeal the sick and maimed. Away !

LII

‘ Away ! and heal all those who have sacrificed

Their precious blood these hallowed realms to gain ;

More fitting that for cavaliers of Christ,

Than sordid gold or vengeance to obtain.

Much, too much carnage has been seen to-day,

In some too great avidity of wealth ;

Let blow the trumps, and my commands convey ;

Forbid henceforth is cruelty and stealth.’

LIII

He ceased, and went to where Toulouse’s count,

Restored somewhat, continued still to groan.

Nor Solymano, with less hardy front,

Keeping his care concealed, addressed his own :

‘ In spite of Fate, my friends, unconquered be,

While Hope is green nor fades into the sear ;

Since ’neath false terror, in reality

Our losses are much less than they appear.

LIV

‘ The foe alone has ta’en our lowliest bands,
The walls, and roofs ; the city is not won ;
That is comprised in your own breasts and hands,
And in the head that wears the royal crown.
The king is safe with those of most renown,
Secure defence surrounding us I see ;
Let then vain trophies of th’ abandoned town
The Franks retain ; repulsed at length they’ll be.

LV

‘ Convinced I am they’ll lose at last ; besides
That, being so vapouring in prosperity,
They’ll turn to rapine and to homicides,
And to unbridled sensuality.
And, for it can’t be far, should Egypt’s host
Come, when to such excesses they give way,
With plunder gorged and ’mid the ruins lost,
They to our swords will fall an easy prey.

LVI

‘ Meanwhile with stones we can command from here
The lofty buildings of the town below,
And the streets leading to the Sepulchre
Our catapults can cut off from the foe.’
Thus, nerve infusing in their sinking hearts,
Their hopes he freshened and their fears allayed.
Now while such deeds were doing in these parts,
’Mid countless armèd troops Vafrino strayed.

LVII

Selected spy against the adverse force,
Vafrino left by the sun's setting rays,
And nightly, unknown pilgrim, bent his course
By most obscure and unfrequented ways.
He passed by Ascalon before the sun
Rose in the east ; but when the solar lamp
Had reached mid heaven, and to decline begun,
Before him lay the vast Egyptian camp.

LVIII

Tents infinite, and, streaming in the breeze,
Blue, purple, yellow standards he surveyed,
While such a Babel of harsh languages,
Horns, timbals, cymbals, barbarous discord brayed ;
Such cries of camels and of elephants
Were blent with neighs of the magnanimous horse,
That he exclaimed : ' All Afric's habitants
Are here transported, and all Asia's force ! '

LIX

He first examined was the camp's site strong,
And if by trench or outworks fortified ;
Then went not furtive sinuous paths along,
Nor from the passing people sought to hide,
But thro' the imperial portals boldly sped,
Asking and answering all, nor caused surmise ;
Such forward brazen front accompanied
His crafty questions and adroit replies.

LX

Here, there, inquisitive, he bent his course,
Thro' every street and square and tent he turned,
Marked well the arms, the infantry, the horse,
Their habits, names, and discipline he learned ;
Nor yet content, to greater things aspired,
Their secrets spied, and partly heard them ; nay,
So deftly managed, that, as he desired,
To the imperial tent he made his way.

LXI

Where, looking round, he saw the canvas torn,
Which left free passage for the voice to come ;
And as it faced it, every sound was borne
From the recesses of the king's own room,
Whose secrets thus were ill-concealed from one
Who, watchful, listened at the outside ; there
Vafrino watched, as if intent alone
The tent's dissevered canvas to repair.

LXII

A purple cloak the belted captain wore,
And stood bare-headed in the lofty tent ;
His helm and shield two youthful pages bore,
He held a spear on which he somewhat leant,
Gazing he was on one of giant frame
And look most sinister, who waited near.
Vafrino, listening, heard Prince Godfred's name
Pronounced, and, thunderstruck, pricked up his ear.

LXIII

The chief was saying, 'Art thou certain then
Godfred to kill?' He answered him, 'Signor,
Certain I am, and to thy court again
Swear to return not, save as conqueror;
Those who conspire with me I will forestall,
Nor other guerdon ask for, save it be,
His arms to hang up on Alcairo's wall,
With these few lines subscribed in memory :

LXIV

"From the Frank captain, Asia's plunderer,
These arms in battle Ormond took, when he
His life-blood took, and has suspended here,
That such remembrance should immortal be."'
'Ne'er will our gracious liege a deed so grand
Unhonoured leave,' the chief supreme replied :
'He not alone will grant thy just demand,
But give thee ample recompense beside.

LXV

'Now, then, the counterfeited arms prepare,
For, lo ! the day of battle draweth nigh.'
'Ready, O prince,' he answered him, 'they are.'
Thus ended parle, nor did the chief reply.
At these broad hints of danger imminent,
Vafrino paused in agony of doubt ;
Pondering what was the secret plot, what meant
Counterfeit arms ; and could make nothing out.

LXVI

Whence he departed, and remained the whole
Long night awake, nor would his eyelids close :
But when the camp had every banderol
Spread to the matin breezes, he arose,
And with the other troops in consort went ;
And when they halted, halted, and again,
Restless, impatient, roved from tent to tent,
To glean some news that might the facts explain.

LXVII

And found, while searching, on a pompous throne,
Armida, girt by maids and knights ; apart,
The enchantress sat, dejected and alone,
And seemed to commune with her own sad heart.
On her fair hands reposed her cheek ; she kept
Fixed on the ground those amorous stars, her eyes ;
Nor could he say for certain if they wept,
But in them teeming pearls could recognise.

LXVIII

In front of her sat fierce Adrastus, who
Seemed not to breathe, or ev'n his eyelids move ;
As on her, motionless, he seemed to glue
His hungry eyes, and feed his passionate love.
But Tisapherne, as him or her he scanned,
With anger kindled or with passion burned,
As envy on one, and love on the other hand,
Now pale, now red, his changing features turned.

LXIX

Then saw Prince Altamore ; he stood apart,
Amid a bevy of fair girls, and rolled
His eager glances with discretionate art,
And by strong effort his desire controlled.
Now on her hand, now on her lovely face,
Now on more guarded charms his vision rests ;
Now penetrates to where the truant lace
A secret path discloses 'tween her breasts.

LXX

At length Armida lifts her eyes, awhile
Soft and serene her beauteous brow appears,
And of a sudden a celestial smile
Breaks out, and flashes through a cloud of tears.
Sir knights,' she said, 'remembrance of your vaunt
Doth much the anguish of my soul assuage ;
For vengeance quick and summary I pant,
And with revenge in prospect, sweet is rage.'

LXXI

'Ah, for God's sake,' the Indian chieftain said,
'Clear thy sad brow, and grieve not, I entreat ;
Soon shalt thou see the execrable head
Of that Rinaldo rolling at thy feet,
Or this avenging hand shall drag him here,
Captive to thee.' Thus promised on his part:
Listening to which, the other cavalier
Spoke not, tho' almost bursting in his heart.

LXXII

Then turning to Prince Tisapherne, she cried,
With a sweet smile : 'What sayest thou, signor ?'
He with derisive raillery replied :
'I will discreetly follow from afar,
As I am backward, yon dare-devil knight ;'
And deeply stung the Indian by his sneer,
Who took him up : 'Most meet it is and right
That thou shouldst follow, and the ordeal fear.'

LXXIII

His haught head tossing, Tisaphernes cried :
'Ah, were I master of my will, proud peer,
And could this falchion use, 'twould soon decide
Which of us twain most backward would appear.
Thee or thy vaunts I fear not to oppose ;
'Tis Heaven alone and hostile love are feared.'
He ceased : to challenge him Adrastus rose,
But 'twixt them fair Armida interfered.

LXXIV

'Ah, why that gift so often given me, would
Ye, gallant knights,' she whispered, 'take away ?
Ye are my champions, and that title should
Alone suffice your quarrels to allay.
I am the offended one in your offence ;
This ye well know.' Thus to the rivals spoke,
According by her gentle influence
Discordant spirits 'neath an iron yoke.

LXXV

Vafrino, present, heard the whole, and thence
The truth surmising, took himself away ;
Of the dark plot he had some evidence,
But found that all in deep involvement lay.
Still, still he enquired ; the obstacles alone
Increased his wish the mystery to track ;
His life he was determined to lay down,
Or bring the important hidden secret back.

LXXVI

Countless, unheard of schemes his subtile brain
Formed, nor a single trick or fraud forgot ;
Still with all that, he could no knowledge gain
Of the arms and plan of the mysterious plot.
Fortune at length (which he had failed to do)
The knot of his perplexities unwound ;
Whence to those snares, 'gainst Godfred set, the clue,
In one entire unbroken chain, he found.

LXXVII

Returned Vafrino had to where still sat,
Amid her champion knights, the lover-foe ;
For there he deemed it best to investigate,
Where such great crowds were passing to and fro.
Here, then, a Pagan damsel he addressed
As an old friend he previously had known,
And former friendship's privilege possessed ;
Familiar and fair spoken was his tone.

LXXVIII

‘Fain would I, too,’ by way of jest, he said,
‘Become the champion of some fair. I feel
Sure I could Bouillon’s or Rinaldo’s head
Rive with one sweep of my avenging steel.
But ask, and I will bring you, if you please,
One of yon barbarous barons’ heads.’ Thus spoke,
By way of prelude, meaning, by degrees,
To more important ends to bring the joke.

LXXIX

But as he spoke he smiled, and smiling made
A certain gesture, to him natural ;
When at that moment, lo ! another maid
Heard, saw, came up, and said to him : ‘From all
The rest I intend to carry off thy heart ;
Nor needest thou unworthy service fear ;
Thee I elect my champion, and apart
Converse would with thee as my cavalier.’

LXXX

Aside she drew, and said to him : ‘Thou art
Found out, Vafrino ; thou shouldst know me, too.’
The crafty squire was troubled sore at heart,
But turned to her again, and smiled anew.
‘Thee, who, once seen, could ne’er from memory fade,
I ne’er before have seen, that I am aware ;
I only know far different, lovely maid,
From what thou call’st me, is the name I bear.

LXXXI

‘ Me on Biserta’s slope Lesbin begot ;
My name’s Almanzor.’ ‘ Tuscan,’ she replied,
‘ Well, well I know thy person, and need not
Guess at what thou wouldst strive in vain to hide.
For I am thy friend, Vafrino, and would fling
My life away thine or thy lord’s to save :
Erminia I, erst daughter of a king,
Tancredi’s captive, and thy fellow slave.

LXXXII

‘ Two happy months, in welcome prison, thou
Stood’st guard o’er me, compassionate sentinel,
Nor fail’dst all kindly courtesies to show :
The same—the same I am—regard me well.’
The squire, who on her face had fixed his eyes,
Not tardy was to recognise the fair.
‘ Safe is thy life,’ she added ; ‘ by yon skies,
By God’s own image in yon sun, I swear.

LXXXIII

‘ Nay, thee I beg, when thou returnest, me
To reconduct to my dear bonds. Alas !
Here in unwelcome bitter liberty
Most gloomy days and troubled nights I pass ;
And if, perchance, thou comest here as spy,
Thy stars have led thee to a chance most rare ;
Unfold I can the foul conspiracy,
With all that had been hard to learn elsewhere.’

LXXXIV

Her, as she spoke, all silently he eyed,
Nor false Armida's treachery forgot;
What fools are men in women to confide—
False blabbing things—they will, and they will not.
Such his reflections were. At length he said :
' If such thy pleasure be, thy steps I'll guide ;
Let this between us be establishèd,
And further talk to better use applied.'

LXXXV

They orders give to be in saddle ere
The encampment for its morning march parade.
Vafrino left the tent, returned the fair
Back to her friends, where she a while delayed,
And feigned, while speaking of her new-found knight,
To jest and banter ; then went forth again :
Went to the trysting place to join his flight,
And from the camp both sallied to the plain.

LXXXVI

At a sequestered spot they had arrived,
And lost sight of the encampment, when he said :
' Tell me how those barbarians have contrived
For Godfred's life their subtle snares to spread.'
At his demand Erminia, bit by bit,
The web and woof of the foul plot unwound :
' Eight princely warriors are engaged in it,
Of whom Ormond the strong is most renowned.

LXXXVII

‘ These have conspired (or moved by wrath or hate),
And these the means they intend to use : the day
On which the two great armies vindicate
Their claim to Asia in pitched battle, they
Upon their arms the red cross sign will wear,
And, armed like Franks, commingle in the fight ;
And as Prince Godfred’s guards accoutred are,
So will their vestments be of gold and white.

LXXXVIII

‘ But on his helmet each will wear a token,
That by his friends he may as friend be known.
And when the two great armies’ ranks are broken,
And all things are in dire confusion thrown,
They’ll seek him out, and trap the valorous heart,
’Neath his guards’ friendly colours and device ;
Poisoned their swords are with infernal art,
So that one scratch will for his death suffice.

LXXXIX

‘ And as the Pagans failed not to surmise
That I your surcoats and equipments knew,
The false devices they made me devise ;
I was compelled the hateful work to do.
This is the reason why their harsh request
I fly, and leave the camp to roam abroad ;
No matter what the mode be, I detest
To taint myself by any act of fraud.

XC

‘These are my reasons—but not these alone.’

Here she stopped short, and, hanging down her head,
Scarlet became, as if ashamed to own

Her closing words, half wishing them unsaid.

The squire, who felt desirous to extract

What she from shame seemed ill-disposed to grant,
Exclaimed : ‘Of little faith, why hide the exact

And real causes from thy confidant?’

XCI

A deep-drawn sigh from her wrung bosom came,

And these hoarse feverish accents reached his ear :

‘Ill-timed reserve ! ill-kept, ill-guarded shame !

Henceforth begone—you are unsuited here.

Why struggle more ? or, vainly bashful, try

To hide Love’s fire beneath your specious flame ?

Due such regards as these were formerly,

Not now that I an errant damsel am.’

XCII

Then said : ‘That night, so fatal unto me,

And to my realm, which forced was to submit,

More than appeared I lost ; my misery

Was not in, no, but was derived from it.

Light is the loss of empire, but, alas !

Myself I lost, together with my throne,

Past all recovery : for I conscious was

That mind, heart, sense, insensate, all had gone.

XCIII

• Thou know'st, Vafrino, then, how, all alarmed,
I, seeing around such desolation spread,
Ran to thy lord and mine, whom, fully armed,
I for the first time saw my palace tread;
And how, low bending, I poured forth this prayer :
“ Unconquered victor, mercy, pity show,
Not for my life I pray thee, but ah ! spare
The maiden honour of thy suppliant foe.”

XCIV

‘ And how he gave his loyal hand to me,
Nor waited for me to complete my prayer,
Exclaiming : “ I will thy defender be,
Nor vain is thy appeal, O maiden fair.”
’Twas then a vague but sweet emotion stole
Down to my heart, and piercing it became,
As it crept onward to my stricken soul,
A mortal wound, a fierce consuming flame.

XCV

‘ He visited me oft, and in sweet strain,
My dole condoling, sympathised with me ;
Nor of my spoils would any part retain,
But said : “ Full freedom I give back to thee.”
A gift that seemed which was, alas ! a theft,
Since from myself he stole me ; and the part
He did restore I prized not ; but he reft
From me, by force, the empire of my heart.

XCVI

‘ Love ill conceals itself : often of thee
Did I, desirous, of my lord enquire ;
Thou, seeing the signs of my infirmity,
Didst answer me : “ Thou burnest with love’s fire,”
Which I denied : but ah ! my passionate sighs
Of my heart’s state far truer witness bore ;
And, tho’ my tongue was mute, my tell-tale eyes
Betrayed the fire that burned me to the core.

XCVII

‘ Unfortunate silence ! would that I had then
Demanded medicine for my suffering state,
Since driven afterwards to give such rein
To my desires, when useless and too late.
In short, I left, concealing the wild strife
That raged within my heart, and thought to die.
Seeking at last some solace for my life,
Love burst the barrier of all modesty.

XCVIII

‘ So that in quest of my dear lord I went,
That he might cure the wound himself had made ;
But on the way met fierce impediment,
Being by a band of lawless loons waylaid ;
Into whose hands a prey I nearly fell,
But ’scaped into a distant wilderness,
And there abode in solitary cell,
Inhabitant of woods, and shepherdess.

XCIX

‘ But in me when that longing had revived,
Which for a time by terror was repressed,
I left ; and when at the same spot arrived,
Me did again the same mishap arrest.
Nor could I fly ; this time the robber band
Pursued too swiftly, and was now too near.
Thus was I captured : from far Egypt’s land,
And unto Gaza bound, my captors were.

C

‘ Me to their captain as their prize they led,
Whom with account so plausible I gained,
That both respected and unviolated
I was, while with Armida I remained.
Thus many times a captive I became,
Thus oft escaped ; such my adventures are.
Still, tho’ enslaved and freed so oft, the same
First chains that bound, still keep me prisoner.

CI

‘ And oh ! may he, who has around my heart
Wound such indissoluble ties, not say,
Seek, errant maid, some other home ; thou art
Not worthy ’neath Tancredi’s roof to stay.
But may he welcome my return ; ah ! may
He let me in my former jail abide.’
Thus spake Erminia, and thus night and day
The pair rode on, conversing side by side.

CII

Vafrino left the high road now, and sought
Either a shorter or securer way,
Which their steps nearly to the city brought,
As from the westering sun the east grew gray ;
When, lo ! black blood-gouts they began to trace ;
Begrimed with blood, then found a warrior dead,
Who blocked the path up, and whose monster face
Heavenward was turned, and, dead, still menacèd.

CIII

The fashion of his arms and strange array
Proved him a Pagan, so the squire passed on,
When, at some distance off, another lay,
Whom, when Vafrino cast his eyes upon,
He thought this surely must a Christian be,
And the dark armour more confirmed his doubt ;
Whence springing down to see his face, ' Ah me !
Tancredi's slain ! ' he wildly shouted out.

CIV

To look at the grim Saracen had stayed
The unfortunate princess, when, like a dart,
The ringing, piercing accents, that betrayed
Vafrino's agony, transfixed her heart.
At Tancred's name she galloped madly there,
Like one with wine or sudden frenzy flown ;
And seeing that face all colourless and fair,
Vaulted not—no, but from her selle dashed down :

CV

And tears in torrents inexhaustible
(Her words with sobs commingling) o'er him shed.
' Ah, sight appalling and most horrible,
At what a moment am I hither led ?
I see thee, Tancred, stretched upon the ground,
And yet my presence thy closed eyes ignore ;
After long absence thou art no sooner found,
Than lost again, alas ! for evermore.

CVI

' Ne'er had I deemed that thou couldst ever be
Unsightly, darling, in my loving sight ;
Yet now I would welcome blindness, not to see
Thy mangled form, beloved, ill-fated knight !
I dare not look. Of those dear, guilty eyes
Where is the fire—ah, where the lustre now ?
Where of those blooming cheeks the damask dyes,
Where the calm sunshine of that noble brow ?

CVII

' No matter, lovely soul, if thou survive
Within yon dark and squalid form, which still
Is dear as ever ; hear, and ah, forgive
The theft and daring of my longing will,
As from these pallid lips cold kisses I
Snatch, which I fondly hoped had been more warm :
From Death some portion of his victory
I'll wrest, in kissing this inanimate form.

CVIII

‘ Compassionate mouth, whose kindly eloquence
Was, living, wont to cheer my cheerless dole,
Grant that I may, ere my departure hence,
Myself at least with one dear kiss console !
Then had I dared to ask, it may be thou
Hadst given what I now steal ; ah, then, before
I die, let me embrace thee once, and now
Within thy lips my sinking spirit pour.

CIX

‘ Receive my fluttering soul, which is resolved
To follow thine ; and ah, direct it where
Thou goest ! ’ Thus spoke, and thro’ her eyes dissolved,
So that a river seemed the weeping fair.
Bathed by her quickening tears, the knight came to,
And oped his lips, tho’ still were closed his eyes ;
He oped his lips and breathed, as in adieu,
One sob, responsive to the maiden’s sighs.

CX

A gleam of hope, as thus the warrior sighed,
Erminia’s bosom for a moment cheers ;
‘ Ah, ope thine eyes for these last rites,’ she cried,
‘ Which I perform, Tancredi, with my tears.
Look at me well, for I would near thee die ;
Death in thy company indeed were bliss.
Look at me well, nor ah, so fleetly fly :
The dying favour I demand is this.’

CXI

His eyes Tancredi oped, and heavily
Closed them again ; again her cries found vent,
When the squire said : ' Not yet extinct is he ;
Cure him then first, and afterwards lament.'
Then stripped him of his arms ; with delicate touch
Her trembling fingers their assistance add ;
His wounds she examined, and, being skilled in such,
Thence certain hope of his recovery had.

CXII

She saw from weakness that his ill arose,
From loss of blood, in too great plenty shed ;
Nor had about her but a veil to close
His wounds, in parts so uninhabited.
But her new-fashioned bandages Love found,
And taught new arts of pity ; where he bled
She with her tresses staunched the blood, and bound
His wounds with locks dissevered from her head.

CXIII

And tho' her scant and delicate veil did not
Suffice to bind his numerous wounds, nor grew
Or dittany or saffron in that spot,
Still many a charm she for such purpose knew ;
So that he shook off, thro' her witching aid,
His death-like sleep, and raised his vacant eyes ;
He saw his squire and the compassionate maid
Impending o'er him, robed in pilgrim guise.

CXIV

‘How com’st thou here, and whence, Vafrin?’ he cried;
‘And who, my kind compassionate nurse, art thou?’
‘Twixt doubt and happiness, Erminia sighed,
While mantling blushes dyed her lovely brow.
‘All in good time thou’lt know,’ replied the fair;
‘Silence meanwhile thy nurse prescribes, and rest;
Thou shalt be healed—the recompense prepare.’
His drooping head then pillowed on her breast.

CXV

Vafrino pondered how ’twere best to bear
Him to his tent ere the evening darker grew,
When, lo! arrived a troop of horsemen there,
That were Tancredi’s followers, he knew.
With him they were when he Arganté met,
And to appeal of arms defied him. They
Then followed not, for that he would not let,
But sought him now, alarmed at his delay.

CXVI

Many besides had the same search pursued,
But these alone, it happed, the mark had hit;
And with their arms now wove a seat, tho’ rude,
Propped up on which, the wounded knight could sit
Then seeing they left Arganté, Tancred said:
‘What! to the crows my doughty rival doom?
For God’s sake leave not thus the valorous dead,
Or him defraud of glory and a tomb!’

CXVII

‘No strife have I with yon mute mass of clay ;
He died as die the brave, whence, comrades, you
Should to his corpse those fitting honours pay,
The only ones that after death are due.’
Then, with the assistance that his troop supplied,
He made them his illustrious foeman bring.
Vafrino kept at fair Erminia’s side,
Like one who guards a closely-guarded thing.

CXVIII

The prince then added : ‘Not unto my tent,
But to Jerusalem, my body bear ;
For, if frail life succumb to accident
Of mortal kind, I would it happened there ;
As there it was the Man Immortal died,
There easier were the road to heaven, and now
Were my one pious purpose satisfied,
To have performed, tho’ ev’n in death, my vow.

CXIX

He said, and thither carried was, and laid
On a soft couch : then sank in calm repose.
A lone secluded dwelling for the maid,
And not far distant off, Vafrino chose :
Then to seek audience of Prince Godfred went,
And entered in, there being no hindrance made,
Tho’ at the time on future plans intent,
He in a balance many a counsel weighed.

CXX

At the bedside where his enfeebled frame
Raymond reposed, the pious captain sat,
And there his counsellors of greatest fame
Around him formed a noble coronet.
Now, while to him his speech addressed the squire,
Of other things none questioned or replied :
' I went according to thy orders, sire,
And have the infidel encampment spied.

CXXI

' But think not I am able to recount
The unnumbered numbers of that motley host.
All trace of plain, of valley, and of mount
Was in the passing of their legions lost ;
Where came, or ev'n approached, their hordes accurst,
Bare grew the earth, the founts and rivers dry :
Not all Judæa's waters could their thirst,
Their hunger not her harvests satisfy.

CXXII

· But, for the most part, their unwieldy bands,
Both horse and foot, of no effience are ;
They give no heed to signals or commands,
Nor draw the sword, and only strike from far :
But there are some of bravery and skill,
Whom Persia's princes 'neath their standards bring ;
Nay, there's one squadron better, choicer still,
Styled the immortal squadron of the king.

CXXIII

‘ Immortal styled, for ev’n defect of one
Never occurs ; whene’er a member dies,
Another’s chosen next him in renown,
Who in succession the void place supplies.
Equalled in sense or strength by few or none,
Is the camp’s captain, Emireno hight ;
Him the king charged has to leave nought undone
Thee to a general action to incite.

CXXIV

‘ Nor do I think the army will retard
Its coming here beyond the second day.
Take care, Rinaldo, then, thy head to guard,
For which all such avidity display ;
’Gainst it the most famed warriors are opposed,
With sword and anger sharpened for the attack,
Since her fair self Armida has proposed
In guerdon to the knight that brings it back.

CXXV

‘ The valorous princely Persian, Altamore,
Monarch of Samarcand, among them vies ;
Adrastus, too, the giant king, whose power
Towards the far confines of Aurora lies,
One so diverse from all mankind, that he
An elephant bestrideth for his steed ;
And Tisaphernes, to whose chivalry
Concordant fame awards the highest meed.’

CXXVI

As thus he spoke, Rinaldo's face all o'er
Sparkled, his eyes flashed fire, and every vein
Swelled, as he burned to meet the foe once more,
Nor could contain himself, or calm remain.
Vafrino then: 'In what I have premised,
But little, worthy captain, is revealed;
In this, the main part of the whole's comprised:
The arms of Judas against thee they wield.'

CXXVII

Then, bit by bit, explained in terms precise
The treacherous stratagems for him prepared:
The poisoned arms, the counterfeit device,
The vaunts he heard, the promise, the reward;
Much to their many questions he replied,
When, a brief pause occurring, his bold brow
The captain raising, to Raimondo cried:
'Sage counsellor, what counsel offerest thou?'

CXXVIII

'I would not, as we had agreed, begin
The assault,' he answered, 'at the dawn of day,
But so invest the tower, that those within
Will not be able to escape away;
And let the camp repose, so that restored
It be, meanwhile, for more decisive fray.
Determine thou, were't better use the sword
With open force, or that in wait it lay?'

CXXIX

‘ But, in my judgment, it behoves thee most
Thyself to care for beyond every care ;
Since thro’ thee conquers, thro’ thee reigns the host ;
And who would guide it were not Godfred there ?
And, that the traitors’ arms be not concealed,
Command thy gallant guard to alter theirs ;
The fraud will thus be unto thee revealed
By the same villains that have laid the snares.’

CXXX

‘ Thou dost, as ever,’ the bold chief replied,
‘ A friendly will and sage discretion show ;
But what is doubtful let us now decide,
And march at once against the impious foe :
The Orient’s victors should not mewed up be
Behind stone walls, or in dark trenches fight ;
No—let the infidel our valour see
In the open field, in the most open light.

CXXXI

‘ In part by prestige of the name dismayed,
They’ll not withstand the victor’s haughty face,
Much less his arms ; whence firmly shall be laid
Upon their overthrow our empire’s base.
The tower will soon surrender, if bereft
Of outward aid, or we can storm the keep.’
Here ceased the noble paladin, and left,
Since the stars, sinking, wooed the world to sleep.



CANTO XX.

I

ALREADY the tenth hour had passed ; their works,
Waked by the sun, mankind had now resumed,
When, from the summit of the tower, the Turks
Afar saw something shadowy, that loomed
Like cloud at falling eve. At length they knew
That 'twas the friendly host, beneath whose tread
To heaven the dust in murky volumes flew,
And o'er the plains and neighbouring mountains spread.

II

Then from the lofty summit to the sky
Raised up their voices the beleaguered host,
With noise resembling Thracian herons' cry
When their nests quitting at the approach of frost,
Which, screaming, fly the freezing blast before,
In countless flocks, in search of warmer lands.
Their fallen hopes, thence revived, restore
Gibes to their tongues and arrows to their hands.

III

Quickly the Frank besiegers knew from whence
Their threats proceed, and that new burst of ire,
And, looking from a lofty eminence,
Beheld the Egyptian armament entire.
At once their breasts a generous warmth inflamed,
All burned with ardour to begin the fray ;
'Give us the signal, peerless chief!' exclaimed
The haughty youth, impatient of delay.

IV

But he refused to lead them on before
The morrow's dawn, and curbed each fiery knight ;
To test the foeman's mettle he forbore,
Nor would engage in desultory fight.
'Twere better, after such fatigue,' he cried,
'One day, at least, we gave up to repose.'
Vain confidence, it may be, that he tried
Of their own strength to foster in his foes.

V

The Christians failed not all things to prepare,
And burned expectant for the dawn's first ray ;
The sky was never so serene and fair
As on that ever-memorable day.
Jocund Aurora smiled, and infinite
Sunbeams appeared to bathe its birth in gold ;
While, past all wont, Heaven magnified its light,
Their deeds in unveiled splendour to behold.

VI

Soon as he saw the golden morning shine,
His marshalled army forth Prince Godfred led ;
But, as a guard around King Aladine,
He placed the Christians who from Lebanon fled,
And had themselves on his protection thrown,
And with them made Count Raymond duty do ;
Nor trusted them, tho' large their force alone,
But left a troop of gallant Gascons too.

VII

So looked, as forth he rode, the sovran chief,
That all on certain victory presumed ;
Grand and august he was, past all belief,
As with new favour Heaven his face illumed.
With honour flushed his manly features were ;
There youth brought back its bloom and purple light ;
So shone his eyes, so noble was his air,
That more than mortal seemed the pious knight.

VIII

Nor had he far proceeded, when in front
The encamped Egyptian army he descried,
And on arriving seized a little mount
That cover to his left and rear supplied.
In shallow wings and front extended, he
Towards the plain country then deployed his ranks ;
In the centre crowded all his infantry,
And winged with wings of cavalry both flanks.

IX

The left, that on the rising ground reclined,
Which did a natural defence oppose,
To the two princes Robert he assigned,
And for the centre his own brother chose.
The right he held himself, where the open plain
Involved most risk, by nature of the ground ;
There, by a dash, the foe might not in vain
Hope his less numerous forces to surround.

X

Here his own Lorrainers, and here he fixed
The best armed and the choicest of his force ;
And 'mid horse archers light foot intermixed,
That were accustomed to engage 'mid horse.
The Adventurers, then, and many a chosen knight
He formed together in a separate band,
As a reserve upon the army's right,
And o'er them placed Rinaldo in command.

XI

To whom the chief : ' To thee, upon this field,
We look for triumph and momentous things ;
Keep thou thy squadron in reserve, concealed
Behind the cover of these spacious wings ;
And when the foe draws near, his flank assail,
Thwart his intentions, and his ranks disperse ;
He, if my judgment err not, will not fail,
Wheeling, to try and take us in reverse.'

XII

From rank to rank, his bounding steed upon,
From horse to foot, then, Godfred seemed to fly ;
Thro' the barred ventayle his flushed features shone,
And lightnings shot forth from his flashing eye.
The hopeful he confirms, the doubtful cheers,
Recalls to mind their vauntings to the bold,
And to the brave past proofs ; some cavaliers
He wins by hopes of honour, some of gold.

XIII

Then on a height he halted, where his first
And noblest troops were posted, and from thence
Into a flood of such rapt language burst,
That all entranced were by its eloquence.
As snow-drifts, loosened by the genial south,
O'er Alpine peaks rush down in torrents, so
Rapid and voluble, from Godfred's mouth,
Melted by zeal, the tuneful periods flow.

XIV

'Scourge of Christ's foes, my gallant camp, my bold,
Intrepid victors of the Orient, lo !
Come is the final fatal day. Behold !
The longed for moment is before you now.
Nor without deep design doth Heaven consent
That in one host is joined the Pagan power.
Together here are all your foemen pent,
That many wars ye end in one brief hour.

XV

‘ We’ll many victories concentrate in one,
In which not more fatigue or risk there will be ;
Let there, then, none be, bold crusaders, none
Alarmed a host so numerous to see.
Ill can such jarring elements unite,
Or you, confused by opposite orders, face ;
Small will the number be of those that fight :
Some will want heart, and some sufficient space.

XVI

‘ Those who will front us are mere savages,
Who, for the most part, without strength or skill,
From servile calling or ignoble ease
Are hither dragged to fight against their will.
Their swords and shields I see wave to and fro,
Their ensigns tremble, tho’ no wind there be ;
Their wavering movements, faltering sounds I know,
And by sure signs their certain doom foresee.

XVII

‘ Yon chief, with gold and purple glittering o’er,
Who looks so fierce and has supreme command,
May have subdued the Arab or the Moor,
Yet not be able against us to stand.
What, when all is in wild confusion thrown,
Can he, however sage or gallant, do ?
His troops he knows not, nor by them is known,
And “there I was, there thou,” can say to few.

XVIII

‘But I am captain of a chosen host ;
Together we have fought, together won ;
And since, to have commanded you I boast,
To me, whose land or lineage is unknown ?
Know I not every sword and every lance,
Ev’n while it trembles pendent in the air ?
Can I not tell if Ireland or if France,
Nay, ev’n whose arm impelled the stroke, declare ?

XIX

‘I ask for nothing new ; let me but find
Each show that zeal which formerly he showed,
Each prove himself the same, and bear in mind
His honour, mine, and the honour of his God.
Away ! cut down the infidel—away !
And through their deaths secure your sacred prize.
But why wait more, or your advance delay ?
Ye have won—I read your triumph in your eyes.’

XX

From heaven a crystalline translucent light
Seemed to descend, as thus the captain spake ;
So, from her mantle, a midsummer night
Is wont sheet-lightning or a star to shake ;
But this, one might imagine, was sent down
From the sun’s inmost core, and there were some
(As round his head it played and formed a crown)
Deemed it a symbol of his reign to come.

XXI

It may be that, if man's presumptuous tongue
Dare pierce the mystery of celestial things,
A guardian angel from Heaven's choir had flung
Round him the sheen of his seraphic wings.
While thus the pious Christian cavalier
The Franks addressed, and issued his commands,
Not backward was Prince Emiren to cheer,
And orders give to the Egyptian bands.

XXII

His numerous troops he ranged in order, soon
As he caught sight of the approaching Franks,
And likewise formed his force in a half-moon,
Foot in the centre, horse upon the flanks.
The right in person he resolved to head ;
Charge of the left on Altamore bestowed ;
The foot, between them, Muleasses led,
And in the centre fair Armida rode.

XXIII

The Indian monarch and the imperial train
With Tisapherne were on the captain's right ;
But, where the left wing o'er the spacious plain
Could in more free and open order fight,
With Altamoro, Libya's, Persia's kings,
And the two chieftains of the desert were ;
And cross-bowmen, with those that whirled the slings,
And shafts discharged, were concentrated there.

XXIV

Thus marshalled, Emireno dashed his spurs
Into his steed, and galloped down the ranks ;
Now spoke himself, now thro' interpreters,
Mingling rewards with threats, rebukes with thanks.
To some he said : ' Why such dejection show ?
What, soldiers, you, and yet betray such fright ?
Why, what can one against a hundred do ?
Your shouts, your shadows should put them to flight.'

XXV

To others : ' Go, belie not your bold look,
And from the foe their lawless plunder wrest.'
In some, the harrowing imagery woke,
And in their minds it moulded and impressed,
Of their imploring country, and the dread
Felt by their suppliant and affrighted young.
' Fancy your country now unfolds,' he said,
' These complaints, these supplications, thro' my tongue :

XXVI

' My laws preserve, and in this fatal hour
Let not my blood our sacred temples lave ;
Our virgins from pollution of the Giaour,
The tombs and ashes of our fathers, save.
To you, lamenting happy times, now fled,
The afflicted elders show their silver hair ;
Matrons to you their babes and marriage bed,
Their little cradles, and their bosoms bare.

XXVII

‘Asia,’ to many he exclaimed, ‘selects
You as the champions of her fame ; from you
On yon barbaric robbers she expects
Vengeance most bitter, but most justly due.’
Thus varied natures to his point he gained,
By varied speeches, and by varied mien ;
But now the captains ceased, for there remained
But little space the rival hosts between.

XXVIII

Oh ! ’twas a grand and wondrous sight to see,
How, with their ranks deployed, the camps at last
Fronted each other in dread rivalry,
Ready to move at the first signal blast.
Spread to the breeze, the banners waved on high,
Plumes gaily danced the towering helms upon ;
And arms, crests, colours, and embroidery,
All steel and gold, flashed brightly in the sun.

XXIX

Appearance of a thick-set wood suggest
The two great camps—so thick the spears abound.
Bent are the bows, the lances placed in rest,
The arrows vibrate, and the slings whirl round ;
The destriers, too, beneath their riders bound,
And seem to second their infuriate ire ;
They stamp, snort, neigh, and restless paw the ground,
And their swoln nostrils breathe forth smoke and fire.

XXX

Fair is ev'n horror in so fair a sight,
And from the midst of fear enjoyment springs ;
Inspiring no less terror than delight,
The horrible, harmonious trumpet rings.
Still, the Frank camp, tho' less in number, seems
More splendid to the eye and to the ear :
With greater brilliancy its armour gleams,
Its trumpets' notes more warlike are and clear.

XXXI

The Christian clarions the first challenge gave,
The Pagans' answer and defiance sound ;
The Franks kneel down, no less devout than brave,
And, rapt with reverence, kiss the hallowed ground.
The space between decreases, disappears ;
The foe on each side charge their charging foes ;
Upon the wings engage the cavaliers ;
The line advances, cross and crescent close.

XXXII

But who, of all the Christians in that fight,
Gave the first blow, and worthy honour gained ?
'Twas thou, Gildippe, wast the first to smite
The great Hyrcanus that in Ormus reigned ;
And (for such glory to a woman's blow
The heavens conceded) pierced his brawny breast ;
Transfixed, he fell, and, falling, heard the foe
With cheers her more than woman's skill attest.

XXXIII

The warrior woman having snapt her spear,
With virile arm her trusty sabre drew,
And 'gainst the Persians urged her destrier,
And charged and broke their densest columns thro' ;
Zopirus, where man girds himself, she smote,
(Almost asunder by her sword-cut hewed),
Then clave, Alarco striking in the throat,
The double passage of the voice and food.

XXXIV

A thrust Argeo, and a downright blow,
Prince Artaxerxes felled, one stunned, one slain ;
She next, the left wrist of Ismael cut thro',
Close to the pliant joint, so that the rein
Dropped from his severed hand ; the trenchant stroke
Then falling hissed upon his charger's ears,
Who, curbed no longer, galloped off and broke
The compact order of the Persian spears.

XXXV

All these, and others, whom the lapse of years
Dooms to oblivion, fair Gildippe slew,
When, thirsting for her spoils, the cavaliers
Of Persia 'gainst her in a body flew ;
At this, her husband's fears awakened were,
Who thither spurred, his darling wife to aid,
Whence linked together the devoted pair,
In faithful union, double force displayed.

XXXVI

The loyal husband, the magnanimous wife,
Used arts of fence unheard-of and unknown :
They only sought to save each other's life
With loving care, forgetful of their own.
The unblenching Amazon beat back the blows,
That hard and heavy 'gainst her dear were sped ;
Strokes aimed at her he failed not to oppose
With shield, nay would, if needed, with his head.

XXXVII

Each makes the other's vengeance and defence
His own sole care ; audacious Artaban
He killed with sudden savage violence—
By him was ruled the isle of Boëcan ;
By the same arm was laid Alvante low,
Who rashly ventured to attack his love,
While Arimont, who gave her lord a blow,
His front from eye to eye Gildippe clove.

XXXVIII

Thus fell the Persians, but more havoc made
The King of Samarcand among the Franks ;
Where'er he turned his horse or trenchant blade,
Down fell like levelled corn the adverse ranks ;
Those blest that did not the first stroke survive,
Nor underneath his ponderous charger got ;
Since those that from his sword escaped alive,
His destrier bit and trampled under foot.

XXXIX

By Altamoro's arm were thus laid low,
Ardon the great, and Brunellon the strong,
The head and helm of one were severed so,
That on his back they in two pieces hung ;
Pierced was the other in that cruel fight,
Where heart-expanding laughter takes its rise,
So that (most horrid and unnatural sight),
Constrained he laughs, and wildly laughing dies.

XL

Nor did his homicidal scimeter,
Alone drive those from the attractive world,
But with them into fell destruction were
Gentonio, Guasco, Rosmond, Guido, hurled.
Who can recount how many Altamore
Slew, or were crushed his charger's weight beneath ?
Who tell the names his slaughtered victims bore,
The manner of their wounds or of their death ?

XLI

There was not one his fury dared confront,
Or ev'n to assail him from a distance feigned ;
'Gainst him alone Gildippe turned her front,
Nor from the questionable test refrained.
On Thermodonte's banks ne'er Amazon
Brandished the shield or two-edged falchion so
Boldly, as she now boldly galloped on
To meet her furious formidable foe.

XLII

She struck where golden and enamelled glowed,
Upon his helmet the barbaric crown,
Which she so shivered, that the Persian bowed,
Forced by the stroke, his haughty forehead down.
Well judged the Pagan king, that from some strong
And stalwart arm that vigorous onslaught came,
Whence shamed, despiteful, he revenged the wrong ;
Revenge was simultaneous with his shame.

XLIII

For the same moment, with such violence
He struck Gildippe's forehead, that she fell,
Reft of all vigour and of every sense,
But her dear spouse sustained her in the selle.
Enough for him, the king struck not again ;
Was it their fortune or his chivalry ?
So a magnanimous lion with disdain
A sleeper leaves, and looks and passes by.

XLIV

Meanwhile Ormondo, to whose ruthless hands
The inhuman office was entrusted, got
Beneath false colours 'mong the Christian bands
With his co-partners in the hellish plot.
Thus skulking wolves that counterfeit the mien
Of shepherds' dogs, concealed by darkness, sneak
(Their doubtful tails their stealthy legs between),
Around the folds, and there admission seek.

XLV

Nearer they came, and now the Pagan knight
Had almost reached the pious Godfred's side,
Who, when he saw, forewarned, the gold and white
Of the suspected uniforms, outcried :
' Behold yon traitor, who in copied guise,
Seeks for a Frank to pass himself, and lo !
Moving against me his accomplices.'
This said, he sprang on his perfidious foe,

XLVI

Whom he maimed mortally ; the villain, dazed,
Nor strikes, nor ev'n defends himself, nor flies ;
Once daring, he, as tho' Medusa gazed,
From terror freezes now and petrifies.
By myriad swords they were at once attacked,
'Gainst them alone was every quiver drained,
Till in such bits were chief and followers hacked,
That of their corpses scarce a trace remained.

XLVII

When Godfred found himself bedabbled o'er
With hostile blood, he to the combat flew,
Where near him he beheld Prince Altamore
Open and charge his closest columns through,
So that they scattered were like Libyan sands
Before the south ; towards him he swiftly sped ;
With shouts and threats rebuked his flying bands,
Assailed the assailant, and checked those that fled.

XLVIII

Never did Ida, ne'er did Zanthus see
Such combat as those two fierce champions waged.
Meanwhile Prince Baldwin and his infantry,
With Muleasses sharply were engaged ;
Nor was the equestrian battle near the hill
On the extreme left, with less excitement fraught,
Where the commander of the Infidel,
With the two powerful chiefs in person fought.

XLIX

One of the Roberts with the chief that guides
The hordes, in fierce and well-matched strife contends ;
But the Indian prince his namesake's helm divides,
And into shivers his chain armour rends.
No foeman to compare with him as knight
Throughout the field fierce Tisaphernes found ;
O'er it he scoured, where thickest seemed the fight,
And much and varied slaughter spread around.

L

Thus warred the rival hosts, whose hopes and fears
Now rose, now fell, in doubtful balance hung ;
Shields shattered, fractured armour, splintered spears,
Were o'er the field in wild confusion flung.
In breasts and bellies disembowelled, here
Sabres were stuck—there lying on the plain ;
Here lay supine—there prone a cavalier,
Who bit the ground in agony of pain.

LI

The steed lay stretched his lifeless master near,
Comrades beside their bleeding comrades bled ;
Foe lay on foe—upon his vanquished peer
The victor lay—the dying on the dead.
No sound distinct—yet was no silence there,
But a strange something that vague fears inspired ;
The curse of rage, the gnashing of despair,
The groans of those that languished and expired.

LII

The arms that were so brilliant to behold,
Squalid and sad, no more delight the eye ;
Lost hath the steel its flash, its rays the gold,
The colours erst so bright, their brilliancy.
All that of gaudy and becoming smiled
In plume and broidery, under foot was pressed,
And what blood stained not, filthy dust defiled :
Such changed appearance the two camps possessed.

LIII

The Arab now, the Æthiop and the Moor,
Who held the extreme left, deploy their ranks,
And, pushing forward in half-circle, pour
Down on the Christians and surround their flanks.
The slingers, too, and archers from afar
Keep on the Franks a galling fire, when, lo !
Rinaldo and his squadron joined the war ;
Less shock were earthquake, lightning's flash more slow.

LIV

Asmir of Meroë among the adust
Æthiops, was of their brave the most renowned ;
Him, where the neck is knitted to the bust,
Rinaldo caught, and stretched upon the ground.
But when the taste of victory had warmed
His thirst for slaughter of the Infidel,
Actions the excited conqueror performed
Prodigious, horrible, incredible.

LV

More deaths than blows he gave, and yet there rung
Of these a storm ; but as so rapidly
A furious dragon lashes forth one tongue,
That all bystanders think he vibrates three ;
Ev'n so, the panic-stricken people thought
His rapid hand three falchions whirled, and the eye
Believed the false, by the swift motion caught,
And terror stamped it as reality.

LVI

The Libyan tyrants and the Negro kings
He slew, and crimsoned with each other's blood ;
And as on other arms his falchion rings,
His troops the example of their chief pursued.
With horrible contempt and frantic glee
The unresisting Infidel they smote ;
Not fight it was, but simple butchery :
Here was the steel, and there the victim's throat !

LVII

But not for long their foes the Pagans faced,
Or wounds received in noble parts ; away
The masses fled, by panic fear so chased
That all were thrown in wildest disarray.
Still the Franks followed on the Pagans' trace,
Till at all points they were discomfited ;
The impetuous victor then relaxed his pace ;
Less fierce he was 'gainst those that fastest fled.

LVIII

As the north wind, which hills and woods oppose,
Its force redoubles and its ire unchains,
But with a breath more soft and gentle blows,
When unresisted, o'er the level plains.
Or as, 'mid rocks, the billows foam and fret,
But lose their fury in the open sea,
So the less opposition that he met,
Decreased Rinaldo's animosity.

LIX

But when, ashamed his noble rage to waste
Ignobly 'gainst the flying foeman's back,
'Gainst the infantry, that had the Arabs placed
To flank it, he directed his attack.
There 'twas exposed, those absent being or dead
Who at that juncture should have rendered aid ;
He came athwart it, charging, at the head
Of his bold men at arms, the foot brigade,

LX

And burst thro' all defence, and 'mid their ranks
Was by sheer force of the momentum borne ;
Down, down they fell before the impetuous Franks :
Whirlwind less quickly lays the pliant corn.
With blood of mangled limbs, with swords and spears,
Paved was the reeking field, and under foot
The Turks were trampled by the cavaliers,
Who o'er them swept, nor paused in their pursuit.

LXI

Rinaldo reached at last the golden car
In which Armida sat in warlike pride ;
A noble guard of vassal barons were
And lovers guarding her on every side.
Him by a thousand well-known signs she knew,
And trembled 'twixt resentment and desire ;
Rinaldo's features changed a little, too :
But she first ice became, and then all fire.

LXII

Like one engaged on something else, the knight
Avoids her car, and passes ; but the mass
Of her sworn champions would not, without fight,
Allow their rival cavalier to pass.
Some couched the spear, others unsheathed the brand
Herself an arrow fixed upon the bow ;
Resentment hardened and impelled her hand,
But Love appeased her and restrained the blow.

LXIII

Love rose 'gainst ire, and showed, beyond all doubt,
What living fire, tho' hid, her heart contained ;
Three times her hand to shoot him she stretched out ;
Three times withdrew it downwards, and refrained.
Anger at last prevailed ; the bow she bent,
And made the feathers of the quarrel fly.
The arrow flew ; but with the arrow went
A prayer that it might pass him idly by.

LXIV

She would have rather that the piercing dart
Back had returned and pierced her breast : if thus
Such power has Love, tho' losing, o'er the heart,
How irresistible—victorious !
But she began her lenience to revoke,
As in her wayward breast fresh furies rise ;
Thus now she dreaded, now desired the stroke
Might tell, and followed it with eager eyes.

LXV

But not in vain directed was the stroke,
Which struck the cavalier's cuirass, and there,
Instead of piercing it, the quarrel broke :
His arms too hard for blow of woman were.
He turned away ; she, burning 'neath the slight
Of his supposed affront, another dart
Shot, then a thousand, nor impinged the knight :
But while she arrowed, Cupid pierced her heart.

LXVI

‘What—is he so invulnerable,’ she said,
‘That hostile force he cares not for, nor feels?
Or is it that his limbs are habited
In the adamant that his hard bosom steels?
On him no power has mortal hand or eye;
Such stern unyielding rigour he doth show.
Armed and unarmed, defeated still am I,
Despised alike as lover and as foe.

LXVII

‘What new devices yet remain to try?
What other form can I now take on me?
Alas! I cannot on my knights rely,
Since thro’ my blinding tears I seem to see,
Nay, plainly see, that, paragoned with his,
Their arms are useless, and their efforts vain.’
For now she saw that of her votaries
Some were struck down, and some already slain.

LXVIII

Alone she felt not able for defence,
And seemed already prisoner and a slave;
To her no assurance (she had bow and lance)
The arms of Cynthia or Minerva gave;
And as a timorous cygnet, o’er whom towers
Fierce taloned eagle with exultant air,
Down to the ground with folded pinion cowers;
Resembling such her timid movements were.

LXIX

But Altamore, who to this moment had
Rallied his Persian followers when thrown
Into confusion, and who would have fled,
But were prevented by his means alone,
Now, seeing his idol brought to such a strait,
Ran not, but flew there, by her charms enslaved ;
Troops, honour, all he abandoned to their fate :
Let the world perish, so his love be saved.

LXX

Escorting then her ill-protected car,
A path he opened with his sword for it ;
But at that moment his battalions were
By Godfred and Rinaldo put to flight.
Their desperate plight the wretched prince discerned
And better lover than commander made ;
When, having saved Armida, he returned,
With, to his beaten troops, untimely aid.

LXXI

Since upon that side from their fierce attack
The Turks were routed irretrievably ;
But, on the other, the Franks turned their back,
The field abandoning to the enemy.
Maimed in the face and in the bosom struck,
One Robert scarce effected a retreat ;
The other prisoner Prince Adrastus took :
Thus equally was balanced the defeat.

LXXII

Then Godfred seized the opportunity,
Re-formed his line, and, without waiting, dashed
Back to the fight in that emergency ;
Thus the two wings entire together clashed.
Each was adorned with glorious spoils, each dyed
With the bright crimson of his foeman's blood ;
Victory and honour shone on either side,
'Twixt whom, still doubtful, Mars and Fortune stood.

LXXIII

While in such manner raged the bloody fight
Between the Christian and the Pagan host,
Up to a terrace on the turret's height
The soldan went, and from that distant post
Beheld, as on a stage or lists beneath,
The tragic drama of the human state,
The assault, the foul unsightliness of death,
And the great game of accident and fate.

LXXIV

Somewhat surprised and stupefied he stood,
When that dread sight first shocked upon his eyes ;
But, as he gazed upon that field of blood,
He burned to share the perils of the emprise ;
Nor curbed his impulse, but without delay
Braced on his helmet, else armed cap-à-pie,
'Up, up !' he cried ; ' no shrinking—for to-day
Our doom is sealed—or death or victory.'

LXXV

Or that, perhaps, 'twas Providence divine,
That did him with such furious spirit fire,
That, to its very ashes, Palestine
Might on that day, that fatal day, expire ;
Or that an impulse to confront his fate
Constrained him, since he felt it was not far ;
Downwards he rushed, unlocked the steel-barred gate,
And bore impetuous, unexpected war ;

LXXVI

Nor waited till his comrades had complied
With his fierce call, but sallied forth alone ;
Alone, a thousand foemen he defied,
Alone, through thousands he pushed boldly on ;
But, as if by his spirit rapt, the rest,
Ev'n Aladino, caught his martial air ;
The vile, the timid, no more fears exprest ;
'Twas less the work of hope than of despair.

LXXVII

Beneath his dreadful rapid strokes fell thick
Those the fierce Turk first met ; he was so skilled
In dealing death around him, and so quick,
That him you saw not killing, but them killed.
From tongue to tongue, from front to rear, there ran
A sudden panic as the tidings spread,
So that the Syrian Christians, to a man,
Thrown into dire disorder, almost fled.

LXXVIII

But with less terror and less disarray,
Their ground the Gascons held, and order kept,
Altho', as nearest to the danger, they
The foremost were o'er whom the tempest swept.
No fang, no claw of beast or bird of prey
Was e'er so crimsoned with the blood outpoured
From lamb or dove, as in that bloody fray
Among the Franks was Solymano's sword.

LXXIX

Athirst and hungry, it appeared almost
To feed upon their limbs and drink their blood.
With him the king, with him the vassal host,
Their sabres in the assailant's gore imbrued ;
But Raymond rushed where Solymano broke
His squadron's ranks ; disdaining he to fly,
Tho' well he recognised that arm whose stroke
Had caused him erst such mortal agony.

LXXX

Again his foe he fronted, again fell,
Re-stricken where he stricken was before ;
'Twas age excessive now began to tell,
For which excessive were the blows he bore.
For him at once a hundred falchions gleamed,
Him hundred shields defended ; but away
The fiery soldan strode, or that he deemed
Him dead outright, or a too easy prey,

LXXXI

And hewed and hacked and massacred the rest,
And in small compass mighty wonders wrought ;
And as fresh fury urged his savage breast,
Material elsewhere for fresh carnage sought.
As, pinched with hunger, one leaves frugal fare
For a rich banquet of abundant food,
So rushed he to more ample battle, where
To sate his maddened appetite for blood.

LXXXII

And down descended thro' the shattered wall
To the great battle with intolerant haste,
His troops their rage retain, his foemen all
The fears that had them from his fury chased.
The Turks would fain the imperfect victory close,
And, by success emboldened, madly fight ;
The Franks resist ; but their resistance shows
Less symptoms of resistance than of flight.

LXXXIII

Still showing front, the Gascon troops give way,
But, scattered o'er the field, the Syrians fled,
Not far from where the gallant Tancred lay,
Who heard their cries within, and from his bed
His maimed and still enfeebled body raised,
Mounted the roof, and saw in full retreat
Some of the Franks, and, as around he gazed,
The count struck down, and some in route complete.

LXXXIV

But valour, which the valorous never fails
Nor droops, altho' the exhausted body should,
The wounded warrior's languid members mails,
As if in place of spirit and of blood.
His ponderous shield, as 'twere a burden light,
He on his weak and bloodless left arm bore ;
Snatched up a naked sabre in his right
('Tis all the brave require), nor waited more,

LXXXV

But rushed down, shouting : ' Whither do ye fly,
Your leader leaving to yon hordes a prey ?
What ! let the temples of the enemy
The trophied armour of your lord display ?
Gascons, go back to Gascony, and tell
The son, you fled from where his father died.'
His unarmed breast, while making this appeal,
Defence to armed, all-powerful hosts supplied.

LXXXVI

And 'neath his heavy buckler, which was made
Of seven well-seasoned and unyielding hides,
Upon whose back there was a covering laid
Of the most finely-tempered steel besides,
From sword, from shaft, from every weapon kept
Raimondo covered, while his trenchant blade
The space around him so completely swept
That the count lay secure, as if in shade ;

LXXXVII

Who, sheltered 'neath such faithful shelter, came
To himself, and, breathing, rose refreshed once more,
Feeling within a double fire inflame
His cheeks with shame, with rage his inmost core ;
And on all sides his flashing eyeballs turned
In quest of him that struck with such despite ;
And seeing him not, with bitter vengeance burned
The outrage on his followers to requite.

LXXXVIII

Back then returned the Gascon cavaliers,
And, bent on vengeance, with their chief unite ;
The Pagan's courage is now changed to fears,
And boldness enters where before was fright.
The attackers yield ; who yielded, now attack.
Thus in a moment all things changed became :
Such Raymond's vengeance, whose bold arm paid back,
By death of hundreds, his one single shame.

LXXXIX

While Raymond thus his wounded pride to sate
Upon the most illustrious Pagans tried,
He saw the usurper of the noble state
Fight in the van, and galloped to his side,
And struck him, and restruck him 'twixt the eyes
On the same spot, nor from his strokes refrained ;
Whence fell the king, who, venting horrid sighs,
Expiring, bit the ground o'er which he reigned.

XC

One chief being absent and the other slain,
Diverse emotions the survivors feel ;
Some, like infuriate animals, amain
Rush in despair upon the hostile steel ;
Others, affrighted, deem it best to flee
Where erst they met with a secure retreat ;
But, mingling with the flying enemy,
The victors enter and their work complete.

XCI

The keep is won. Upon the sill and stairs
The fugitive Pagans fall with heavy loss ;
And Raymond, mounting to its summit, bears
Aloft the glorious ensign of the Cross,
And in the presence of both camps unrolled
The haughty symbol of their victory.
It fiery Solyman did not behold,
Since absent at the greater fight was he.

XCII

He reached the field, which reeking was and red,
And every moment, from fresh slaughter, streamed,
So that now like the city of the Dead,
Where Death his trophies shows and stalks, it seemed.
There he a destrier saw, with dangling rein,
Fly, riderless, in terror from the ranks,
Whom, caught, he mounted, and across the plain,
To reach the battle, pressed its heaving flanks.

XCIII

Great, but brief succour, Solymano brought
To the disheartened Saracens—you'd say,
Lightning he was that, with destruction fraught,
Flashed unexpectedly, and passed away ;
But marks eterne, in many a blasted stone,
Leaves of its transient momentary flight.
Hundreds he slew ; but of one pair alone
Will I, to snatch from Time their memory, write.

XCIV

Edward and fair Gildippe ! your hard fate
And honourable actions I would link
With and 'mid noblest spirits consecrate,
If such be granted to my Tuscan ink ;
So that your names as miracles appear
Of Love and Virtue stamped upon all time,
And lovers honour with a pitying tear
Your noble deaths and my unworthy rhyme.

XCV

The heroic woman turned her steed to oppose
The Turk, who spread such havoc o'er the field,
And caught him full with two great slashing blows ;
One struck his flank, one clave in twain his shield.
He, who the heroine by her armour knew,
' Behold the strumpet and her minion ! ' cried ;
' Better defence the needle were for you,
Than lover's arm or broadsword by your side.'

XCVI

He ceased, and, with more rage than e'er possessed,
A fierce and desperate blow against her drove,
Which, her arms riving, dared impinge her breast—
Butt worthy only of the shafts of love.
She, dropping suddenly the bridle rein,
Appeared to droop—to perish ; her sad fate
Her Edward saw, and spurring on amain,
Not tardy was, but most unfortunate.

XCVII

What in that dire dilemma should he do ?
As rage and pity urge him different ways ;
That, to revenge himself on him who slew,
This, his dear falling treasure to upraise ;
But Love, impartial, showed him how he might
Neither compassion nor revenge neglect :
To vent his anger he employed his right,
And his left arm Gildippe to protect.

XCVIII

But power and will divided thus in twain,
Powerless against the stalwart Pagan proved,
Since her he could not in the selle sustain,
Nor slay the homicide of his beloved ;
Nay, it so happened that the soldan lopped
His left arm off, which had Gildippe stayed,
Disabled whence his precious charge he dropped,
And on her own, his limbs at full length laid.

XCIX

Like elm, to whom the married vine's frail form
Clings for support, and twines enamoured round,
If felled by axe or rooted up by storm,
Drags with himself his consort to the ground,
Stripping the leaves, and crushing 'neath his weight
The grapes and green apparel of his bride ;
He seems to grieve far more than for his fate,
For her who falls unmurmuring at his side.

C

Thus Edward fell, for her alone he grieved,
Whom heaven had made his partner unto death ;
They tried to speak, but could not, they but heaved
Sighs indistinct, as failed their waning breath ;
Each gazed on each, each pressed the other, loth
To part, while ebbing life within them lay,
When in a moment darkness shrouded both,
And their pure souls together passed away.

CI

Fame then unloosed her tongues, and spread for flight
Her airy pinions, and their fate affirmed ;
Nor from Fame only heard Rinaldo it,
Its truth a special messenger confirmed :
Within him grief, benevolence, and wrath,
Combined with duty, for deep vengeance cried,
When the fierce king, Adrastus, crossed his path,
And in the soldan's presence him defied ;

CII

Shouting aloud : ‘ By well-known signs thou art he
Whom I pursue, and burn to meet again ;
Shield there is not but I have scanned, and thee
Have called by name the livelong day in vain ;
Now, to my goddess will I pay my vow
Of vengeance with thy head. Turn, then, and try
By proof our valour, nay, our fury, thou
Armida’s foeman, her defender I.’

CIII

Thus challenged him and dealt a desperate stroke,
First on his temples, then his neck, nor clave
His helmet, that no mortal arm had broke,
But to his saddle-bow Rinaldo drave ;
Who in the side Adrastus wounded so,
That vain the aid Apollo’s art could bring,
Whence fell (the honour due to one sole blow)
The monstrous mortal, the unconquered king.

CIV

Horror and mute amazement, blent with awe,
The hearts and blood of the bystanders froze ;
And Solymano, when that stroke he saw,
Perturbed became at heart—his colour goes,
And clearly seeing his impending doom,
Could not determine what ’twere best to do ;
For him unusual circumstance, but whom
On earth do not Heaven’s laws eterne subdue.

CV

As in their fitful slumbers the insane,
Or sick, at times strange troublous visions see,
Now they desire to run, and stretch, and strain
Their limbs, with desperate but vain energy,
Since to the greatest efforts which they make,
Responds not palsied hand or nerveless foot ;
Now they would loose the tongue and try to speak,
But no words follow, and the voice is mute.

CVI

So would the soldan force himself to engage
The Christian prince, and strove and struggled too,
But knew not in himself his wonted rage,
For ev'n himself in his spent forces knew ;
What sparks of courage rose within him, were
Quenched by a sense of supernatural fright ;
Still, though perplexed his bosom was, he ne'er
Thought of submission, and still less of flight.

CVII

The victor reached the irresolute Turk at last,
And on up-coming (so it seemed to him)
Likeness to aught of mortal mould surpassed,
In fury, speed, and magnitude of limb ;
Little resisted he, nor, as he died,
Uttered one groan, or ever blenched the brand ;
With every generous usage he complied,
Nor act performed that was not great and grand.

CVIII

But when the soldan, who in battles past
Oft fell, and, like Antæus, rose anew
More fierce than ever, pressed the ground at last
To rise no more, around the rumour flew :
And Fortune, light and fickle tho' she be,
No longer durst the victory leave in doubt,
But stayed her wheel, and 'neath their leaders she
Joined the Frank forces, and on their side fought.

CIX

The imperial guard now joined the rest in flight ;
Formed of the pith and marrow of the East,
Once styled immortal 'twas, but now, in spite
Of that haught title, to exist it ceased.
The captain seeing its standard-bearer fly,
Stopped and addressed him in this galling strain :
' Art thou not he whom, among thousands, I
Selected my lord's standard to sustain ?

CX

' That proud device I trusted not to thee
To bear it backward, recreant Rimedon !
What ! would'st thou, coward, thy commander see
Beset by foes, and leave him all alone ;
What wouldest ? Safety ? Then return with me,
Since where thou goest leads to certain death :
Let those here combat who preserved would be ;
The path of honour is the safest path.'

CXI

Back he returned with burning shame suffused.

Then the chief menaced, struck, and even more
Harsh reprimand against the others used,

Nay, made them face the steel they shunned before ;
Thus of his broken wing, the better part

Once more he rallied, and some hope still found ;
But Tisaphernes gave him greatest heart,
Who yet had ceded not one inch of ground.

CXII

Marvels wrought Tisaphernes on that day ;

There, were the Normans routed by him—here,
Thrown the bold Flemings into disarray,

And slain Ruggiero, Gerard, and Garnier ;
But when he had towards deathless honour's goal

Lengthened by glorious deeds his short-spanned life,
Careless to live, he, with undaunted soul,
Sought the most deadly peril of the strife.

CXIII

He saw Rinaldo, and tho' crimson red

Had grown his colours of cerulean blue,
And tho' his silver eagles' claws and head

Ensanguined were, the cognisance he knew.

' Behold the greatest, deadliest risk,' cried he ;

' Ah, Heaven, I pray thee, aid my valour now,
So that Armida his destruction see ;

Victor, his arms to Mahomet I vow.'

CXIV

Thus prayed, but were his prayers of no avail,
Unheard by his deaf idol, Mahomet.
Then, as a lion lashes with his tail
His sides, his innate savageness to whet,
So he his anger roused, which, sharpened then
Upon love's whetstone, into fury flashed.
He gathered all his vigour, and amain,
Crouched 'neath his shield, against Rinaldo dashed.

CXV

When, seeing assailant with uplifted blade,
Against him galloped the Italian knight.
At once a space was in the middle made,
And there all rushed to view the appalling sight.
Such and so different were the Italian's blows
And those the Saracenic hero smote,
That, lost in wonder, all, both friends and foes,
Their own resentments and mishaps forgot.

CXVI

One only struck, one struck and wounded, who
More solid arms and greater strength possessed.
With blood the Persian did the field imbrue ;
Gone was his shield, and rent in twain his crest.
The increasing weakness of her champion knight,
His riven mail, the lovely witch beheld,
And saw the others stricken with such fright,
That knot but feeble them together held.

CXVII

Erst guarded by so many cavaliers,
Now on her car forlorn, deserted, she
Existence hates, the yoke of bondage fears,
Despairs of vengeance and of victory,
And springing down, 'twixt frenzy and affright,
Vaults on her palfrey, and with rapid stride
Gallops away ; while hang upon her flight
Anger and love, two sleuth-hounds, at her side.

CXVIII

Thus Cleopatra, in the days of yore,
Fled all alone from the ensanguined fight.
Leaving to face the fortunate emperor,
Imperilled by the sea, her faithful knight,
Who, rendered faithless to himself by love,
After the solitary sails soon sped.
To follow her thus, Tisaphernes strove,
But this the Italian paladin forbade.

CXIX

Soon as the Pagan's idol disappeared,
It seemed the sun had set and daylight fled ;
And 'gainst him who so unjustly interfered,
He desperate turned and struck upon the head.
To forge Jove's writhen thunderbolts, less light
Bronte's huge hammer falls, than on his crest
Down fell the falchion of the Persian knight,
Whose stroke his forehead doubled to his breast.

CXX

But soon erect, and upright as before,
Rinaldo whirled his sword, and with it clave
His solid hauberk ; right to the heart's core,
Where life resides, the vengeful point he drave,
And so far past it, that a double wound
From breast to back the Saracen displayed,
Whose flying soul for its departure found
More than one broad and ample passage made.

CXXI

Then paused Rinaldo to examine where
He could assault or succour give, but found
The Pagans broke and flying in despair,
And all their standards prostrate on the ground ;
Whence chilled his heat of martial fury grew,
And he desisted further blood to shed ;
And calm becoming, her remembered, who
Had from the field forlorn, forsaken fled.

CXXII

Compassion urged him (for he saw her flight)
To show her every courtesy and care,
Remembering he had sworn to be her knight
At his departure ; whence he galloped where
Upon the grass her palfrey's hoofs betrayed
The course she had taken in her lonely ride.
Meanwhile she reached a spot whose gloomy shade
Bespoke its aptitude for suicide.

CXXIII

Well pleased she was that to a spot so drear,
Blind fortune had her wandering footsteps led ;
Here she dismounted from her destrier, here
Her bow and other arms deposited.
'Unfortunate arms that crimson should,' said she,
'To issue forth uncrimsoned from the fight ;
I lay you down, here henceforth buried be,
Since my deep wrongs unable to requite.

CXXIV

'Yet no, amid so many, it can't be
But one at least be bathed in blood to-day ;
If other breasts seem adamant, ye
Venture to pierce a woman's bosom may ;
In this, mine own, which naked I expose,
Display your merits, and your victories gain ;
Tender it is—how tender Cupid knows,
Who 'gainst it ne'er discharged one shaft in vain.

CXXV

'Your former cowardice I will forgive,
If against me ye prove but sharp and true ;
But in what state does poor Armida live,
If her sole hope of safety lies in you ?
Since unavailing other medicines prove,
Save only wound on wound and smart on smart,
Let wound of arrow cure the wound of Love,
And Death relieve the anguish of my heart.

CXXVI

‘Blest if, in death, I carry not away
This plague to infect the regions of the dead ;
Love, then, remain ; alone, Wrath, with me stay,
Eternal partner of my sorrowing shade,
Or back return with it from lightless hell
To him who made such mockery of me,
And in such guise that visions horrible
Companions of his restless slumbers be.’

CXXVII

Here ceased ; and, ’stablished in her purpose, she
The strongest and most piercing arrow chose,
When, lo ! arrived the cavalier to see
How near her life approached a desperate close.
Desperate she looked, and as her face he scanned,
Saw there death’s ghastly pallor was expressed ;
Whence, stealing up behind, he seized her hand,
Which held the barb directed to her breast.

CXXVIII

Armida turned, and saw, to her surprise,
Him of whose coming she was not acquainted ;
Loudly she screamed, and turned away her eyes
Disdainful from the well-loved face, and fainted.
Bending her pliant, delicate neck, she sank
Like a fair lily rudely snapt in two ;
He made his arm a column for her flank,
And hastened her tight bodice to undo,

CXXIX

And did with tears of tender ruth bedew
The face and bosom of the unhappy fair ;
Then, as from rath and silver fall of dew
The faded rose resumes its blooming air,
So she, reviving, lifted towards the skies
Her features, bathed with tear-drops not her own ;
Thrice she raised up, and thrice cast down her eyes
From that dear face, she dared not look upon ;

CXXX

And with her fair frail hand disdainfully
The stalwart arm that bore her up repelled ;
Oft, oft she tried, nor could escape, since he,
The more she struggled, the more tightly held.
At length caught firmly in that dear embrace—
For tho' she feigned, perchance, it still was dear ;
Without one look directing to his face,
Weeping, she thus addressed the cavalier :

CXXXI

'Alike at parting or returning, how
Cruel thou art, and of all pity void ;
'Tis strange my death thou shouldst prohibit—thou
That hast the enchantment of my life destroyed.
Seek'st thou to save me ? For what fresh disgrace,
For what new punishment reserved am I ?
The traitor's secret artifice I trace ;
But naught, indeed, they can, that cannot die.

CXXXII

‘Thy honour, doubtless, would be incomplete
 Couldst thou not show the world a captive maid,
Laden with chains, at thy triumphant feet,
 By force now captured, as before betrayed.
How glorious this ! Time was I craved, ah, me !
 Both peace and life, but now with what delight
I would welcome death ; yet ask it not of thee,
 Since aught thy gift were hateful in my sight.

CXXXIII

‘No ; thro’ myself to free myself, I hope,
 By some means, cruel ! from thy cruelty ;
If dagger, poison, precipice, or rope
 Thy victim fail, still, still sure ways I see ;
And, Heaven be praised, ev’n thou canst not restrain
 The power in me that have the will to die.
Cease, cease thy flatteries ; see ! he still would feign,
 Still foster idle hopes, deceive and lie.’

CXXXIV

Thus mournèd she, and with the mournful stream,
 That love and rage expressed from her fair eyes,
Affectionate tears he mingled, in which gleam
 Compassion chaste and tenderest sympathies ;
And answered, speaking in the gentlest strain :
 ‘Armida, calm thyself ; thy life I save,
Not for disgrace or insult, but to reign ;
 Not foeman—but thy champion and thy slave.

CXXXV

‘If thou dost faith from these my words withhold,
Look in mine eyes and read Truth’s language there ;
Upon the throne where reigned thy sires of old
Thee to replace most solemnly I swear ;
And, ah ! may Heaven some rays of light send down,
Thee from the mist of Paganism to free,
As I will cause that in the Orient none
In princely state or splendour equal thee.’

CXXXVI

Thus speaks, and prays, and bathes, and heats his prayers,
Now with rare tears, and now with melting sighs ;
Whence as a snow-drift before tepid airs,
Or from the fervour of midsummer skies,
Her wrath which seemed so fast, dissolved away,
And other passions in its place arose.
‘Behold thy slave, thy fiat I obey :
Ev’n as thou wilt,’ she said, ‘of me dispose.’

CXXXVII

Meanwhile the Egyptian captain, who beheld
His sovereign’s standard prostrate on the ground,
At the same time that Rimedon was felled
By peerless Godfred’s arm, and saw around
All his vast host discomfited or slain,
Craven would not in the last act appear ;
And went in search of (nor sought long in vain),
Illustrious death from famous cavalier.

CXXXVIII

Forward he 'gainst the elder Bouillon rode,
For he was worthiest foe beyond compare,
And, both in passing and arriving, showed
Such reckless courage, that it seemed despair ;
And at some distance shouted out : ' To die
I come, and seek it at thy hands ; alone
In my last desperate efforts I will try
That my destruction shall involve thine own.'

CXXXIX

This said, they each against the other dashed
At the same moment with uplifted lance ;
Cleft was the solid shield, disarmed and gashed
The left arm of the paladin of France ;
Who, in return, the venturous Infidel
On his left cheek by such a blow reversed,
That he fell backwards, stunned upon his selle,
And, trying to rise, was through the belly pierced.

CXL

Prince Emireno dead, there now remained,
But few survivors of the bloody fray ;
Godfred pursued the vanquished, but refrained,
Seeing at his feet Prince Altamoro lay,
With broken helm and sword, while round him were
Masses of fierce vindictive soldiery.
Loudly he shouted to his troops : ' Forbear !'
And, ' Baron, yield thee ; I am Godfred.' He

CXLI

Who to no act of degradation e'er
Had bowed his lofty and magnanimous soul,
Hearing that name, which rang with sound so clear
Throughout the world, from Libya to the pole,
Replied : ' Sir knight, I yield to thy demand,
For thou art worthy, but thy victory '
(Here placed his sword in gallant Godfred's hand)
' Not poor in glory or in gold shall be.

CXLII

' For me the riches of my realm, for me
My consort's gems a ransom shall provide.'
' Heaven gave me not such nature as to be
Greedy of gold,' the Christian prince replied ;
' Keep, keep whate'er thy Persian lands contain,
And India's teeming coasts ; I seek not for
The lives of others ransom to obtain ;
I traffic not in Asia—I make war.'

CXLIII

He ceased, the Pagan to his guards consigned,
And the course followed of the fugitives,
Who to the ramparts fled, nor there could find
The least protection for their fated lives ;
The intrenchments taken were soon filled with gore
Which in red rivers ran from tent to tent,
Staining their trophies, and bespattering o'er
Each barbarous trapping and rich ornament.

CXLIV

Thus Godfred triumphed, and as still for him
The setting sun sufficient daylight shed,
Without a pause, to freed Jerusalem,
Christ's blest abode, the conquerors he led ;
Nor yet laid down his blood-stained mantle, he
Sped to the Temple, where, with beaming brow,
He hung his arms up, and on bended knee
The great tomb worshipped, and performed his vow.



NOTES
TO
THE SECOND VOLUME.

NOTE 1.

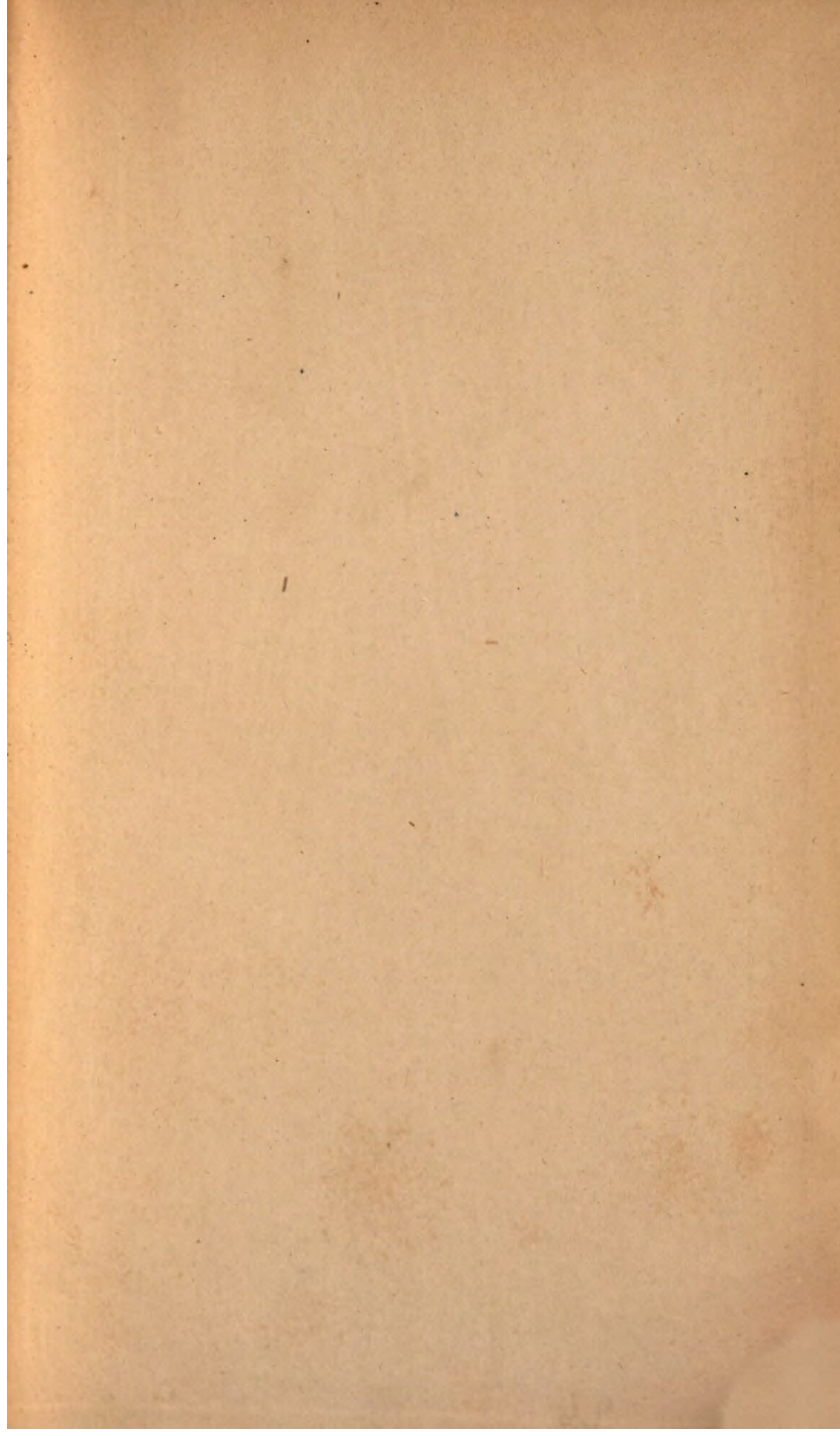
CANTO XI—STANZA XXXIV.

The fosse here spoken of is cut in the living rock. It runs parallel with and immediately under the north wall as far as the north-east angle. It is mentioned by Josephus as having existed in his days; consequently, however the city may have extended in other directions, it certainly formed at that time, as it does now, the boundary of Jerusalem on the north.

NOTE 2.

CANTO XII—STANZA XLVIII.

The Golden Gate stands in the eastern wall, not far from that of St. Stephen; but, as communicating with the precincts of the temple, is now kept closed. Both from inside the Haram and from outside the walls it is a beautiful object, and to the lover of the Jerusalem certainly one of the most interesting spots in the place. It directly fronts the Mount of Olives, being separated from it by the valley of Jehoshaphat. Proceeding from it in a southerly direction, we come to the Fountain of the Virgin, the scene of the combat between Clorinda and Tancredi, it being the source whence he procured water to baptize her.





Tasso, Torquato,

The Jerusalem delivered of Torquato Tasso

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